NABY KEITA ○ CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ○ JOE GOMEZ ○ CHRIS KIRKLAND ○ SHEVCHENKO PARK RE-LIVED

LIVERPOOL FC





THE AWESOME STRENGTH OF THIS

WORKING WITH JURGEN KLOPP

HAPPY SHAQ



THE ANFIELD ATMOSPHERE

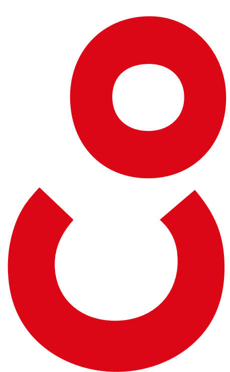
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BOBBY'S BACK IN THE GOALS



Amid a forest of mostly blue-shirted players Roberto Firmino connects perfectly with James Milner's corner to put the Reds two-up at Leicester City on the stroke of half-time. Liverpool hold on to take the points and, as Milner says, "You can see the way we know we can play, and the way we've played the last couple of games is just finding a way to get that result when things aren't going for you. That's what you have to do sometimes in the Premier League."

WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF FUN





Gini Wijnaldum, Alisson, Nathaniel Clyne, Bobby Firmino, Dominic Solanke, Joe Gomez and Fabinho strike a pose after winning a four-team mini-tournament during a training session at Melwood. It was all good fun but there were also key coaching principles involved and a competitive edge to the games. The team that came last, by the way, had ta forfeit: they were required to head up to the canteen and bake carrot cakes for the rest of the first-team squad! And the budding chefs, overseen by the club's head of nutrition Mona Nemmer and canteen staff, were: Simon Mignolet, Andy Robertson, Virgil van Dijk, Naby Keita, Curtis Jones, Daniel Sturridge and fitness coach Conall Murtagh.



TAKE A BOW MO SALAH

Another game, another goal from Mohamed Salah, this time what turned out to be the winner at home to Brighton. It was his 29th goal in 29 games at Anfield and the 45th Premier League goal he's been directly involved in (34 goals and 11 assists) since the start of the last season.



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KEEPING UP WITH THE PAST

Only three LFC goalkeepers – Bruce Grobbelaar, Pepe Reina and Simon Mignolet – had kept clean-sheets in the opening three games of a league season in the last 51 years until Alisson did the same against West Ham, Crystal Palace and Brighton. They won't be the last teams the big Brazilian shuts out.



"Anfield will bring the best out of me"

Naby Keita waited patiently for his dream-move to Liverpool to finally happen – now he wants to show Kopites what he's all about

Words: Chris McLoughlin

> I FELT AS IF I WAS ALREADY IN THE TEAM BECAUSE I WATCHED LIVERPOOL PLAY A LOT LAST SEASON, NEARLY EVERY GAME



very year is different, but it is estimated that the UEFA Champions League final has a global TV audience of over 350 million viewers across more than 200 countries. In May 2018, when Liverpool took on Real Madrid in Kiev, Naby Keita was one of those viewers. It was a strange night for him.

Keita agreed to sign for Liverpool on 28 August 2017 after a release clause in his contract was triggered early, but under the terms of the agreement the 23-year-old would remain in Germany for one final season before completing his Anfield move on 1 July 2018.

It was a frustrating time for him, the footballing equivalent of agreeing to buy a new house but not being allowed to move in for 11 months while all his new neighbours were having a whale of a time on the same street without him.

"That one year at Leipzig was not easy for him, you could see it on the pitch," said Jürgen Klopp. "We wanted him desperately and we accepted it [the wait]. We didn't fight, but he wanted to come immediately. When somebody tells you 'it can happen in a year' nobody in the world likes that message."

Although he was on the outside looking in, Keita was enthralled at the Reds' progress to the Champions League Final with goal-laden games played in heady atmospheres the story of our season. But when the final came around it also left him with a lingering sense of regret. Truth be told, Naby wishes he was here last season too.

"I felt as if I was playing in the Champions League final in Kiev myself," he says as we chat at Melwood through the help of a French-speaking interpreter. "I felt as if I was already in the team because I watched Liverpool play a lot last season. Nearly every game.

"When I was watching I could see myself integrating into this team, that playing for this team seemed like a logical step. I had so much desire to come to Liverpool, but of course I had a contract at my previous club which I had to respect.

"Now am I here, it feels like my dream has come true."

Kopite dreams of Liverpool finishing 2017/18 as champions of Europe were shattered in Kiev as Real Madrid ran out 3-1 winners, but the opportunity to get back on the horse, as they say, has arrived. European football is on the agenda again this month and Keita – who made five Champions League and five Europa League appearances for RB Leipzig last season – can't wait to experience the Anfield atmosphere for the first time.


L.F.C.
Chartered
L.F.C.



"I think it is well-known around the world about the legendary atmosphere at Anfield. It reminds me of the atmosphere I experienced playing in the Champions League at the stadium of Besiktas.

"I think that the atmosphere at Anfield will help me a lot – it will motivate me to get the very best out of myself."

Quite how long it will take to see the best of Keita in a Liverpool shirt is an issue his manager has been talking about. If Klopp was in charge of creating an ideal world – and what a fun place that would be – then Naby would have been zipping around his midfield last season. It wasn't to be, but the Liverpool manager is a firm believer that good things come to those who wait.

"Naby...we all have no clue how good he can be. He's too young to judge. What can we say? Obviously he learned very quickly already in the last few years, from Austria to Leipzig, now here. So he adapts constantly and brings himself to the next level. Adapts to the other players, uses them really well.

"So that was the idea when we signed him, it was worth waiting for sure. Usually you don't get a player like him. It's quite difficult. He's 23 and all the other clubs are not blind, so we were lucky we could do very unusual business a bit early and wait for him."

Naby himself is a realist. Think back to his LFC debut against West Ham United last month and the phrase 'like a duck to water' springs to mind. But Keita has done his research and chatted to enough people to know that first seasons in English football don't always go swimmingly.

"I think it's fair to say that the Premier League is a tough league," he smiles. "I'm very motivated to be playing in it – it's an attractive proposition – but I've been told by many people that a lot of overseas players come into the Premier League and they take time to integrate, depending on the circumstances.

GERARD HOULLIER TOLD ME THAT IF I KEPT PLAYING WELL I COULD PLAY FOR LIVERPOOL ONE DAY IN THE FUTURE

"So playing in the Premier League can be difficult, but I am very motivated to play here, not just for myself and my team-mates, but for the club. Everybody around me has been very supportive towards me so I am certainly giving everything I can to get settled into the team quickly."

Naby's home town in Guinea, the port-city of Conakry, has an estimated population of two million in a country where around 12 million live. He says his nation is football-mad and with only four other Guineans having played in the Premier League – Kaba Diawara (Arsenal and West Ham), Titi Camara (Liverpool and West Ham), Mo Camara (Derby County) and Kamil Zayatte (Hull City) – and none having done so since the latter in 2010, he believes interest in English football back home now that he is a Liverpool player is going to be huge.

"I would say this year it is going to be even more popular than it has been in the past. I can't speak for the entire population, but I would estimate 90 per cent of Guineans watch the Premier League."

Naby has previously spoken about playing football in his local neighbourhood and pretending he was Steven Gerrard: "We used to play in the streets wearing a Liverpool shirt. My dad had a love of Liverpool back then when I was 11 or 12 years old. I wanted to be like him [Gerrard]. It couldn't be anyone else. He was always the boss of the team." But his father, Sekou, also loved watching Barcelona's Portuguese midfield playmaker Deco.

He nicknamed Naby 'Deco' in honour of his hero – a nickname Keita still uses on his official keitanabydeco Instagram account – so I ask the Reds no8 if kids in Guinea will now be getting called 'Naby' by their dads if he stars for Liverpool?

"Maybe!" he replies with a beaming smile after laughing at the question. "It is quite common in Guinea for a father to have a hero or an idol and pass that name on to his sons. So if I continue to do well for Liverpool then I suppose it is quite possible things could go that way. We will have to see what happens!"

If Keita does, as we all hope, go on to thrive in a red shirt, the role former Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier has played in shaping his career should not be overlooked. Houllier didn't 'discover' Keita as such, but was instrumental in accelerating his progress.

In 2013, when Keita was just 18 and playing Ligue 2 football in France for relegation-threatened FC Istres, Red Bull global soccer-scout Benoit Thans saw him play a starring role in an unlikely 2-1 win at eventual runners-up Lens.

Thans continued to watch Keita regularly and soon made Houllier – Red Bull's global sporting director – aware of his immense potential. Houllier also liked what he saw and in turn recommended Naby to Ralf Rangnick, who at the time was sporting director of both Red Bull Salzburg and Red Bull Leipzig, and that paved the way for his 2014 move to Salzburg.

Within a season Naby was attracting attention from across the Continent – Liverpool first scouted Keita during RB Salzburg's Champions League qualifier against Sweden's Malmo FF in 2015 – but Houllier's influence meant Naby's next move was to sister club RB Leipzig in 2016.

"He had many, many clubs on him," Thans told ESPN, "but at the Red Bull Group was Gerard Houllier, and Gerard also spoke about him. He went to Salzburg first and he was one of the best players. After one or two years he goes to Leipzig."

After just one season in the Bundesliga, Liverpool made their move – but Keita already had his heart set on a move to Anfield long before that following a conversation with Houllier.

"I was thrilled to meet Monsieur Houllier when I first encountered him," recalls Naby. "To meet any former Liverpool head coach is a great honour, but I was very young and he asked me about my ambitions? He said: 'If you continue playing well, wouldn't you like to play for Liverpool Football Club in the future?' From that point on it became my objective.

"I have worked hard to get here and I'm not going to stop working hard just because I am here at Liverpool, but it was a very important moment in my life to have met Monsieur Houllier."

A box-to-box bundle of energy who presses opponents like a Jack Russell chasing a postman but also has the ability to dribble through midfield and split defences with incisive passes, Keita played against some esteemed midfield opponents during his two years in German football and made quote an impression. He must've been good if Xabi Alonso says so.

"He has the hunger, the will to compete, and in football terms he's an all-round midfielder," said Alonso, who played against Naby twice for Bayern Munich during the 2016/17 campaign in games that his side won 3-0 and 5-4.

"He's good with the ball, he runs and dribbles very quickly with

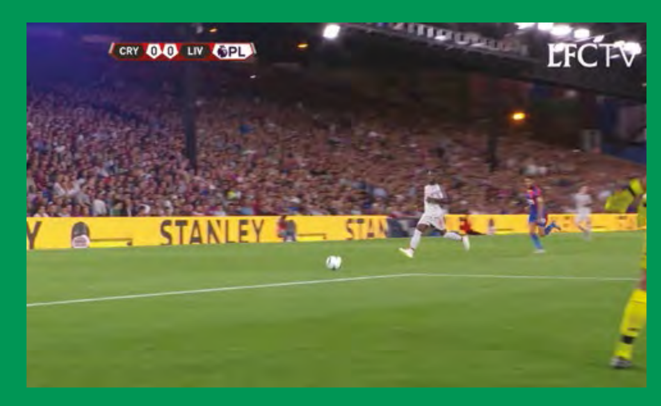


Naby's numbers pre-Liverpool

Club	Season	Games	Goals
FC Istres	2013/14	23	4
RB Salzburg	2014/15	44	6
RB Salzburg	2015/16	37	14
RB Leipzig	2016/17	32	8
RB Leipzig	2017/18	39	9
	Total	175	41



Driving forward during the win at Selhurst Park



The receive-and-turn at Crystal Palace that had the travelling Reds purring – Naby sends his marker, as they say in Liverpool, for an *Echo*!















the ball, but he also likes to make things tick in the midfield. I think for this position in front of the holding midfielder, or even as a holding midfielder or close to the front-three, he can have that role to find the space and to be up there.

"He will have to adapt to the idea, but I don't think that he will have many problems because he's a great player and very complete. Under Jürgen you need to do [play like] 'bang, bang, bang' and if he gets it, he will do well."

The mention of Liverpool legend Alonso – who scored 19 goals in 210 games for the Redmen between 2004 and 2009 – and the praise he afforded Keita is met with a big smile. "I like Xabi Alonso a lot. I saw him play many games when he was at Bayern and I have a great respect for him because he is a player who has achieved a great deal in football.

"To get a compliment from a player like Alonso gives me great pride and I was very pleased to hear his comments about me."

Liverpool's determination to sign Keita leads to the natural conclusion that he'll be a nailed-on first-team regular, but the player himself is taking nothing for granted. A look around the dressing-room tells him that Jordan Henderson, James Milner, Fabinho, Gini Wijnaldum, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (when fit again), Adam Lallana and young Curtis Jones are all vying for three midfield places under a manager who consistently insists that all of his squad have parts to play.



Celebrating a Mo goal with the main man and Sadio Mane

"Competition for places in midfield is something that can only help the team. Obviously the coach will go ahead and make his choices and I am sure he will choose the best players at the time for each match as they come along. That way everybody gives their best throughout the season and I think it also gets the best out of everybody."

One thing that all Kopites should expect to see from Keita is goals from midfield. He averaged ten-a-season when he was in Austria and 8.5-a-season in Germany with his goalscoring tallies always being higher during his second seasons at a club (four and 16 for RB Salzburg in 2014/15 and 2015/16, followed by eight and nine in 2016/17 and 2017/18 for RB Leipzig).

So how many times can we expect to see Naby find the net for Liverpool this season?

"First and foremost I should say that I am very much a team-player and I always think about the team first. The Premier League is different to the other leagues where I have played and everybody knows it is very tough, but I will do my best to beat my own personal records.

"I'm the kind of person who thinks that if I score eight goals in one season my objective must be to score nine goals in the following season. That's the kind of mentality I have."

If he achieves that he'll have netted at least ten goals for Liverpool by the end of the season – an ambitious target – so I ask whether he's got plenty of celebrations lined up as Kopites are well used to seeing Daniel Sturridge's wobbly-arm dance and Roberto Firmino's samba moves, for instance, when they hit the net.

"It depends on the moment!" he laughs. "It depends on the atmosphere, the goal and what is going on in my head at the time! We will see!"

One thing Keita is crystal-clear on is what he wants to achieve from his first season as a Liverpool player. From Red Bull to a bullish red, he's got his eyes on two big pieces of silver and is very forthright about it.

"It's not going to be easy and we can only try, but this year we should be looking to come out of the season with a trophy. The Premier League or the Champions League. That is the objective."

Help Liverpool to win either of those this season and Naby Keita really will have been well worth the wait, but then it feels like he is already.

~~AWAY SCREENING~~

HOME VIEWING



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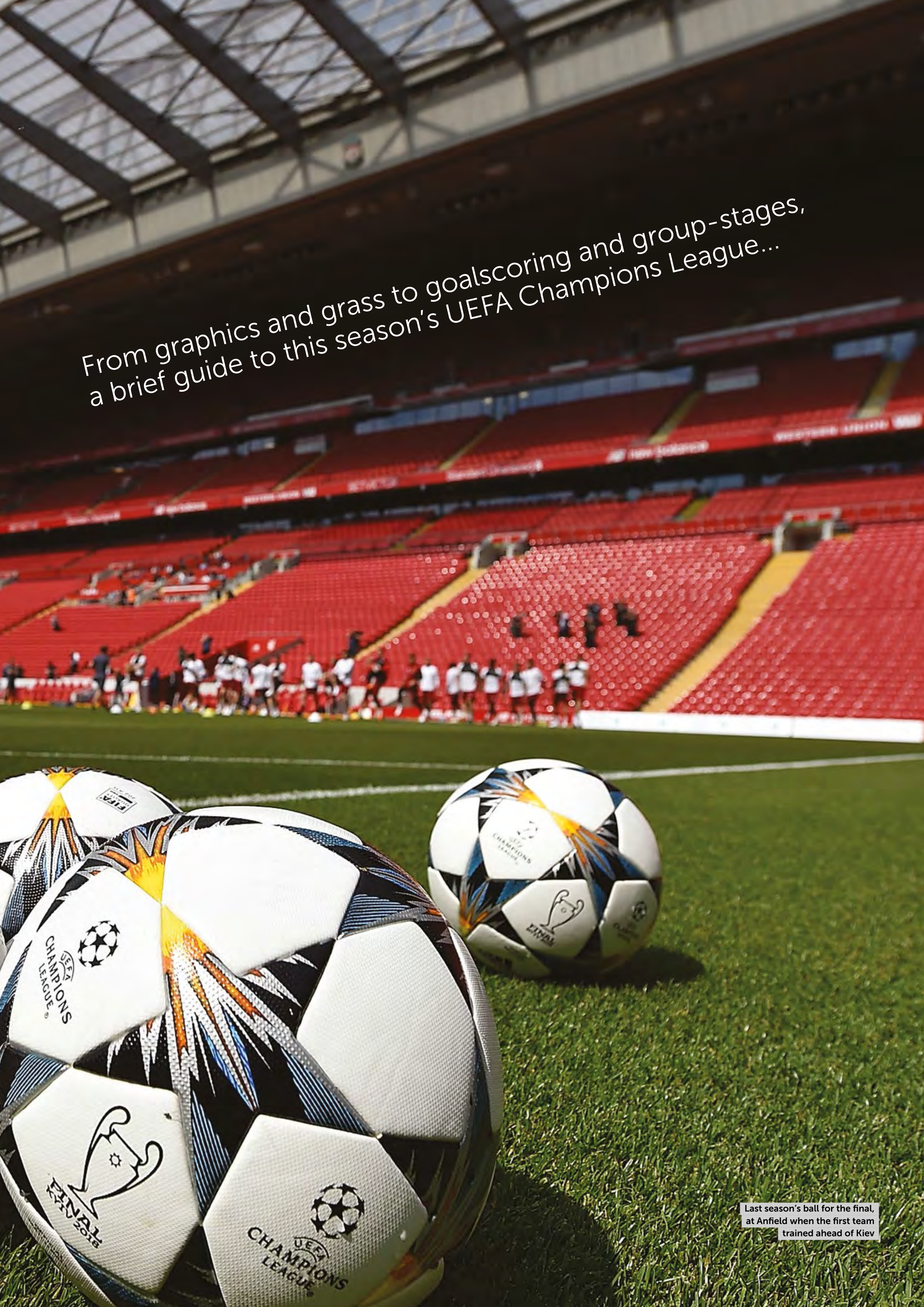


HE'S A PERFECT 10

He already knew where the net was but wearing the famous number 10 shirt seems to have brought the goalscoring best out of Sadio Mane who started the 2018/19 season with four goals in four games. Keep that ratio up and it'll be quite a year.



BRING ON THE STARBALL



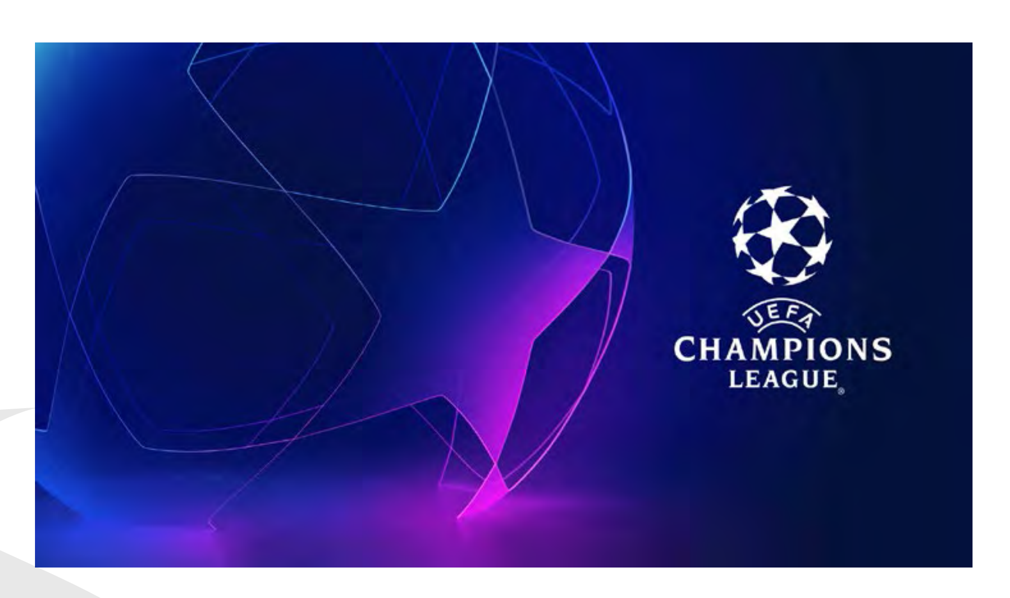
From graphics and grass to goalscoring and group-stages, a brief guide to this season's UEFA Champions League...

Last season's ball for the final, at Anfield when the first team trained ahead of Kiev

GOING LOGO

There's a new look to what's called the Champions League's 'brand identity' this season (it's refreshed every three years) with the 'ultimate stage' stadium and 'starball' visuals as the centrepiece. They've been enhanced for ultra-high-definition media with the ball graphic now appearing to light up, change colour and glow when key moments of a match are highlighted.

That dark-blue colour, by the way, is inspired by the 'night skies' in Europe.

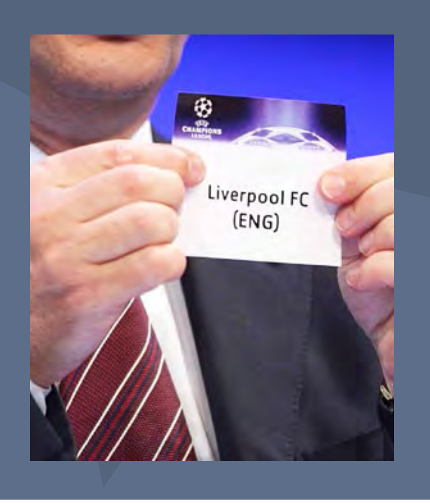


GROUP DYNAMICS

The 26 teams to have proceeded automatically to the group stage are: the current Champions League and Europa League winners; the top four from Spain, Germany, England and Italy; the top two from France and Russia; and the champions of Portugal, Ukraine, Belgium and Turkey. The remaining six have negotiated various qualifying rounds.

Because the two Madrid clubs that won the Champions League and Europa League also finished in their domestic top-four, their automatic places go to the champions of the Czech Republic and the third-placed team in France.

An association may have a maximum of five teams in the group stage – which happened to England for the first time last season with the Reds, Manchester City, Chelsea, Tottenham joined by Europa League winners Manchester United, who'd finished outside the Premier League's top four.



QUICK ON THE DRAW

So, Group C: Paris Saint-Germain, SSC Napoli and Red Star Belgrade – it's going to be very, very interesting.

Just after the draw was made Reds boss Jürgen Klopp spoke to the club's official website: "To be 100 per cent honest, it was not that I had a group I wished for or whatever. I expected a difficult group, we have a difficult group, and that's what the Champions League is all about.

"PSG are one of the most exciting teams in the world and I think their target is to win the Champions League, so that will be two interesting matches.

"Napoli, we beat them in pre-season [in Dublin], but it goes without saying these two games will be completely a different challenge.

"I've been to Napoli with [Borussia] Dortmund, so I know what the atmosphere is like there. In fact, it's where I got a suspension [for being sent off]. I can do better, obviously!

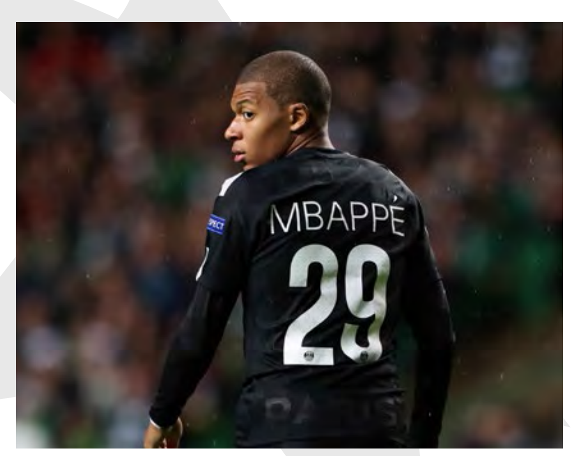
"Red Star, I watched them [qualify] last night. They came through and it will be, again, a very, very intense atmosphere I am sure.

"But that's how it is, it's the group and I am fine with that. Now let's go.

"The Champions League is the biggest club competition in the world, so it should be difficult because it is.

"I am looking forward to watching PSG a bit more often, which is a very interesting project for sure over in France with [coach] Thomas Tuchel. Facing Neymar will be, for our Brazilian guys, like meeting a friend again. It's a big challenge, but for all the others it is a big challenge to face us.

"'It is how it is' is the best way to describe it; don't think too much about it. If you think about the group, you are already out. We will play the games, we will be competitive – that's what we have to make sure – and that is all."



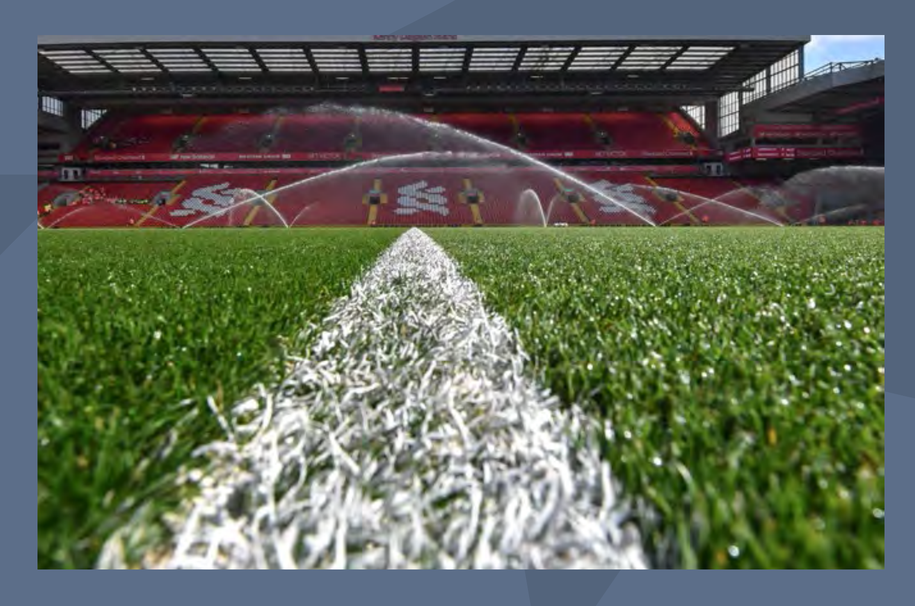




KEEPING IT REAL

Did you know that theoretically LFC is allowed to change the pitch at Anfield from natural grass to artificial turf (heaven forbid) during the tournament? According to Article 30 Paragraph 3 of the official regulations for 2018/19, 'this change must occur after the end of the group stage [and] such requests must be submitted to UEFA by 1 December and the new pitch must be in place 30 days prior to the first match in the round of 16. UEFA reserves the right to inspect the pitch before approval'.

Oh, and the height of the grass may not exceed 30mm and should be the same for both the training sessions and the actual match.





SILVER AND GOLD

The original Champions League trophy is used for the official presentation ceremony at the end of the final, but it doesn't go home with the winners – it stays with UEFA and they get a full-size replica instead (like this one on the left at Anfield), along with 40 gold medals for first-team squad members and coaching staff.

MADRID CALLING

With the selection of Atletico Madrid's Estadio Metropolitano, this season the Spanish capital will become only the second city to have staged five or more European Cup/Champions League finals after London (Wembley). Real Madrid's Estadio Santiago Bernabeu staged the finals of 1957, 1969, 1980 and 2010.



GLEESOME THREESOME



Roberto Firmino, Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane scored ten goals each in last season's tournament, and their combined total of 30 is the most by a trio of players from a single team in a Champions League campaign.

Next-best is Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema with 28 goals for Real Madrid in season 2013/14, then Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez with 27 for Barcelona in 2014/15.

Bobby scored his ten goals the quickest, in 11 games, which a record shared with Inter Milan's Adriano (2004/05 and 2005/06).

Liverpool's overall total of 47 goals scored is the most in a single Champions League season (over three per game), surpassing Barcelona's 45 in 1999/2000.

HOME BASE

Liverpool's unbeaten run at Anfield in European competition currently stands at 16 games, with eleven wins and five draws, since the Reds lost at home to Real Madrid in the Champions League group stage in October 2014.





ALL IT TAKES

Who will be number one in the UK singles charts when the Reds, hopefully, walk out for the final at the Estadio Metropolitano on Saturday 2 June 2019? Last season it was *One Kiss* by Calvin Harris and Kiev-Kopite-queen Dua Lipa, which at eight weeks became the longest-running no1 by a female artist in the UK this decade.

Here's what was top of the pops for Liverpool's previous European Cup/Champions League appearances: 2007 *Umbrella* (Rihanna featuring Jay-Z); 2005 *Lonely* (Akon); 1985 *19* (Paul Hardcastle); 1984 *The Reflex* (Duran Duran); 1981 *Stand and Deliver* (Adam and the Ants); 1978 *Night Fever* (Bee Gees); 1977 *Knowing Me, Knowing You* (ABBA).



SHIRT CHANGED

Say, for example, that a visiting team arrived at Anfield with an away kit which clashes with Liverpool's red or 'could lead to confusion' in the referee's opinion, according to UEFA guidelines. It would in fact be the home team that has to change colours, for practical reasons, so in theory we'd have to wear either deep violet or grey-violet-and-steel.





TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Seven team officials (including a team doctor) and seven substitutes are allowed inside the technical area on the bench, and like the recent World Cup finals this season a fourth sub can be used during extra-time from the knock-out stage onwards.

Outside the technical area, if space permits, up to eight extra seats are allowed for club staff (kit-manager, assistant-physio etc).

Not that it would ever happen, but for the record, Article 42 Paragraph 4 states: 'Smoking is not allowed in the technical area during matches'.


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SCOTLAND SKIPPER

Andy Robertson started the season in fine form, creating goals for Mo Salah (v West Ham) and Sadio Mane (v Leicester), and now he's been appointed as the new captain of Scotland. Not bad for a 24-year-old who was playing part-time 'fitbae' for Queen's Park not so long ago.

Words: Chris McLoughlin




GO JOE

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, says Reds defender Gomez, who at the still tender age of 21 aims to make up for lost time

If you were one of the many Liverpool supporters that attended every Champions League game at Anfield last season only to miss out in the ticket ballot for the final in Kiev then you'll be able to identify with Joe Gomez. His season also ended in gut-wrenching fashion.

The 21-year-old defender made 31 appearances for the Reds in 2017/18. Six of them came in the Champions League, his first taste of the competition. When the draw for the last eight paired the Reds against Manchester City it was widely considered that he would start at right-back to deal with the threat of Leroy Sane, having previously played so well against the German winger in Liverpool's 4-3 Premier League victory against Pep Guardiola's side at Anfield. But it wasn't to be.

On 23 March 2018, twelve days before the first leg with City, he injured an ankle playing for England against the Netherlands. It was an injury that would ultimately require surgery to resolve and one that gave the South Londoner a quandary: should he go under the



IT WAS HARD TO TAKE, MISSING THE END OF LAST SEASON, AND I HAD A FEW TOUGH MOMENTS DEALING WITH IT PERSONALLY, BUT I JUST HAD TO GET OVER IT AND SUPPORT THE BOYS


Joe was outstanding for England against Brazil last November



surgeon's knife knowing it would rule him out of big Champions League games and the World Cup, or should he try to play through the pain-barrier to help the team and keep his season alive?

After a month on the sidelines he chose the latter and played in Premier League games against West Bromwich Albion and Stoke City in late April at a time when manager Jürgen Klopp was short on options and trying to rest others ahead of those big Champions League games.

It proved to be two games too far. On 8 May he confirmed on his Instagram account that he'd had the operation and his season was over. He wouldn't play against Real Madrid in Kiev. He wouldn't spend the summer in Russia. Missing out hit him hard.

Three months on and Gomez is fighting fit again and started the season at centre-half. He isn't someone who spends his days thinking of what might have been, but admits missing the Champions League final – and a possible World Cup call-up – was difficult to deal with.

"It was hard to take, to be honest, just because it was a significant end to the season with the Champions League final and going into the summer with the World Cup," he says in LFCTV's dark-room at Melwood, where most of the player-interviews you see on your screens are filmed.

"I had a few tough moments dealing with it on a personal note, but at the end of the day I had to get over it and support the boys. I was thinking: what will be, will be – that sort of thing.

"I have to take positives from the whole season. I can't just forget the rest of the season because of the last bit, even if it is natural to focus on that because it is more fresh in the mind.

"The initial injury...I don't feel like I could prevent that. It was an



TOUGH TIMES HAVE SHAPED ME AS A PERSON, MADE ME APPRECIATIVE OF WHAT I DO FOR A JOB

accident, it happens, but probably I could have managed it better. Again, that was down to my desire to want to be a part of those games. I suppose it sort of, I dunno, not backfired but showed that I really have the desire to play in those games.

"It probably clouds your judgement at the time, but anyone would want to play in those big games. You just want to do all you can to try to get fit for them, so it was a really frustrating time for me. I think it happens in a lot of cases. It's the nature of football, it's just the way the game goes and injuries are part-and-parcel of it."

I first interviewed Joe for this magazine in July 2015, shortly after his move from Charlton Athletic. He was 18 at the time, had moved away from his London home and was – in truth – an unknown player to most Liverpool supporters. Yet back then the Lewisham-born defender wasn't overawed by his new surroundings and came across as a level-headed but ambitious young man.

"I just want to be in and around the team and to show what I can do," he said. "One of the first things I looked at was what kind of opportunities I would get to play. If I'm not involved straightaway there might be an opportunity for me to get games on loan, but my main ambition is to play games for Liverpool."

He started that 2015/16 campaign, under the management of Brendan Rodgers, as first-choice left-back. Although his Liverpool career has since been disrupted with injuries he continues to give the impression of being someone who sets the bar high and is determined not to let setbacks derail his ambitions and goals. A fair assessment?

"I'm not really one to talk myself up," he smiles, "but I definitely have the desire to be successful. I've had some tough times but they've shaped me as a person.

"It has made me appreciative of what I do and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to do this as a job, to do something where you can continue to try to progress every day and enjoy it.

"I don't take that for granted and I want to do everything to the best of my ability. I just want to come away feeling that I have been the best I can be. That's all you can do, really."

Liverpool return to Champions League action this month when the group stage gets underway and that appreciation felt by Joe is evident when I enquire as to how he found playing in Europe's premier competition for the first time?

"The Champions League was everything I imagined it to be. European nights at Anfield are special, so to be a part of it was great. We're in it again this year and hopefully we can match that progression and success in the tournament, but on a personal note it was an amazing experience and one that I took a lot from.

"When the Champions League music is playing and you're lined up front of the camera going past you, it's one of those iconic moments. It's surreal, but you've just got to try to take it in your stride and not overthink it. As a young lad it is a dream and something you've got to reflect on at times and be appreciative of."

Liverpool won three and drew three of the six Champions League games in which Gomez appeared last season and he learned plenty along the way, not least from the 3-3 draw in Sevilla. Amidst a frenzied atmosphere inside the Ramon Sanchez Pijuan Stadium the Reds let a three-goal half-time lead slip after the break and it taught Gomez what a difference noise levels can genuinely make.



Back in business on the summer tour to America

"That Sevilla game was difficult because you could feel how much of an impact the atmosphere made on the game. It showed how powerful an atmosphere can be and I'm just grateful we have Anfield on our side at times when things are going against us.

"It was different to playing in an away Premier League game. Every ground is different, but that was a typical Champions League night in Sevilla and I don't think nights like that can be matched, week in, week out, in the Premier League."

One man who experienced the Anfield atmosphere from the other side last season is goalkeeper Alisson, who faced a red tidal wave when Roma visited L4 in the Champions League semi-final. He's now Liverpool's first-choice goalie and it's fair to say Gomez is enjoying playing in front of the Brazilian international.

"Alisson is top, top quality. He shows his coolness when we play and his relaxed nature has a ripple effect on the rest of the team. Being relaxed, but in the right way, brings a lot to the team because he is the first building-block for us when we are trying to play football and the style of football that we play. He spreads confidence that we can keep the ball and play out the way the manager wants us to, but he's also a top, top goalkeeper.

"The relationship between the goalkeeper and the centre-halves is very, very important. We see the pitch in front of us and have to be the ones who communicate to the rest of the team.

"As a triangle – as a unit – we are the building blocks so it's important that we are all on the same page and that we know each other well. I think that will continue to grow because it gives you real confidence having a goalkeeper like him behind you.

"It's slightly different when you are at full-back. You are still in the defensive unit but the full-backs have more licence to go forward so there is more communication between the goalkeeper and the centre-halves. You're more directly involved with each other playing in the centre."

Gomez is arguably Liverpool's most versatile defender. During his Anfield career he's played in both full-back roles, in the centre of a back-four and as part of a three-man defensive unit, performing so consistently well that you'd be hard-pushed to say what his best position is.

I'M A COMPETITIVE PERSON, IT BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN PLAYERS AND THAT'S ONLY GOING TO BE A POSITIVE FOR US WHEN THE NUMBER OF GAMES INCREASES

Despite his versatility he's well-aware that with Trent Alexander-Arnold, Nathaniel Clyne, Alberto Moreno, Andy Robertson, Virgil van Dijk, Dejan Lovren, Joel Matip and emerging youngsters Nat Phillips and Conor Masterson all competing for defensive positions, a place in Klopp's starting XI isn't guaranteed. But Gomez is a character who embraces competition.

"I'm quite a competitive person. I think it brings the best out of me personally and I think competition brings out the best in everyone, otherwise they wouldn't be here.

"You have to have a competitive mentality to play at this level so I think it's only going to be a positive for us this year. We'll appreciate it when the number of games increase, the intensity rises and the gaps in-between fixtures get shorter.

"Competition for places will only help us in training and improve




GOMEZ
12
L.F.C.
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L.F.C.
Standard
Chartered
L.F.C.

the whole standard of everything we do, so I think it's a positive."

October begins with Manchester City's visit to Anfield and there has been plenty of talk about whether the Reds can challenge the defending champions for the Premier League title. Gomez believes City and Liverpool aren't the only contenders and that focusing on themselves, not their rivals, is the best way to build a title challenge.

"Man City set a marker down last year but we all hold the belief that we can challenge not only them but the other threats as well.

"Obviously if they produce the same standard as last year they will be the main contenders, but there are other good teams too so we have to focus on ourselves more than anything. We can't just be watching their results, we've got to deal with everything put in front of us ourselves first. If we do that things will work out in the end."

Talk of title-tilts and multiple challengers leads me to ask the three-times capped England international whether he thinks the standard of Premier League football has improved since he became a Liverpool player in 2015, especially given the reality that clubs such as newly-promoted Fulham can spend over £100m in a single transfer-window?

MAN CITY SET A MARKER DOWN LAST YEAR BUT WE ALL HOLD THE BELIEF THAT WE CAN CHALLENGE NOT ONLY THEM BUT THE OTHER THREATS AS WELL

"There are always top players in the Premier League so I don't know if the size of transfer fees now influences people to think the league is harder that it was. There is so much quality around us now and everybody wants to come to the Premier League. But it's hard to judge, to be fair, because I'm still young myself.

"When you look through history there have always been top players in the Premier League but all I can say is at this time I know the standard is very high."

With a Thursday-morning training-session looming it's time to wrap the interview up and leave the darkened room just down the corridor from Jürgen Klopp's office, but I can't let Joe go without asking what he's looking to achieve on a personal level from the 2018/19 season?

"A season of progression," he says after pausing to think. "Progress in whatever shape or form that may take. Obviously I want to play games – that's the foundation and everyone here wants to play – but I think a season where I progress and learn from what I have experienced, and build on that, would be good for me.

"As a team we want success through trophies. We all want to win something. That's what we play for, that's what football is about. Hopefully we can win something this year because success would be a good marker of our progression.

"It would also mean a lot to me because, like I said at the start, it was tough to take not being involved at the end of last season and I am definitely as hungry as ever to be successful here."



THEY'RE ONLY ON LOAN

Rounding up who's gone where and how they're faring in their spells away from Anfield

LORIS KARIUS

POSITION: Goalkeeper
AGE: 25
CLUB: Besiktas
On a two-year loan with the Istanbul club, Loris made his Turkish Super Liga debut in a 1-1 draw at Buraspor where he made a fine save, was beaten once and also booked for time-wasting.





ADAM BOGDAN

POSITION: Goalkeeper
AGE: 30
CLUB: Hibernian
Budapest-born Bogdan kept a clean-sheet on his Hibees debut against Motherwell at Easter Road and is now back in Neil Lennon's side after missing three games with a hip injury.

MARKO GRUJIC

POSITION: Midfielder
AGE: 22
CLUB: Hertha Berlin
Grujic conceded a VAR-awarded penalty for handball 12 minutes into his first start for Hertha Berlin at Schalke but it was missed before they went on to win 2-0 at the Veltins-Arena.



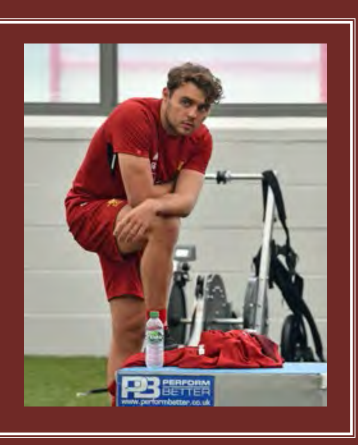


SHEYI OJO

POSITION: Winger
AGE: 21
CLUB: Stade de Reims
Experiencing French football for the first time, Ojo made his Stade de Reims debut as a substitute for the final 12 minute at home to Montpellier but his new side were beaten 1-0.

CONNOR RANDALL

POSITION: Defender
AGE: 22
CLUB: Rochdale
Yet to make his League One debut for Rochdale, right-back Randall is on loan at Spotland until January having spent last season in Scottish football with Hearts.



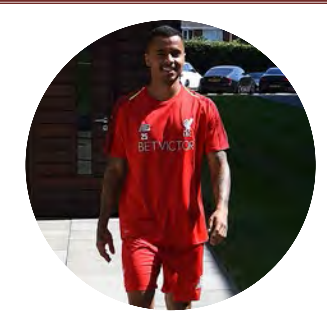
HARRY WILSON

POSITION: Midfielder
AGE: 21
CLUB: Derby County
After starting the season in midfield for Frank Lampard's Rams the talented young Welsh international has been on the sidelines recently with a groin injury but is expected to return later this month.



DANNY INGS

POSITION: Forward
AGE: 26
CLUB: Southampton
Boyhood Saints fan Ings made Kopites cheer again when he netted his first Saints goal against Everton at Goodison Park and was on target again in a 2-0 win at Crystal Palace.



ALLAN

POSITION: Midfielder
AGE: 21
CLUB: Eintracht Frankfurt
Now in his fourth loan-spell away from Anfield following stints with SJK (Finland), Sint-Truiden (Belgium) and Hertha Berlin, he's yet to be involved for Eintracht Frankfurt.



TAIWO AWONIYI

POSITION: Forward
AGE: 21
CLUB: KAA Gent
Nigerian striker Taiwo opened his account on his home Europa League debut with a strike against Jagiellonia Bialystok but has yet to net in the Belgian First Division A.

OVIE EJARIA

POSITION: Midfielder
AGE: 20
CLUB: Rangers
Ovie has made a flying start to his loan-spell at Ibrox, netting his first SPL goal in a 3-3 draw Motherwell and scoring at FK Ufa to secure a Europa League group-stage spot.



BEN WOODBURN

POSITION: Forward
AGE: 18
CLUB: Sheffield United

Used largely as a substitute in the Championship, attacker Ben converted a spot-kick in a Carabao Cup penalty shoot-out against Hull City but the Blades were knocked out.



RYAN KENT

POSITION: Winger
AGE: 21
CLUB: Rangers
Kent has been a regular under Steven Gerrard in Rangers' Europa League team, appearing in all six of their qualifiers and also started their recent 1-0 Old Firm defeat to Celtic.

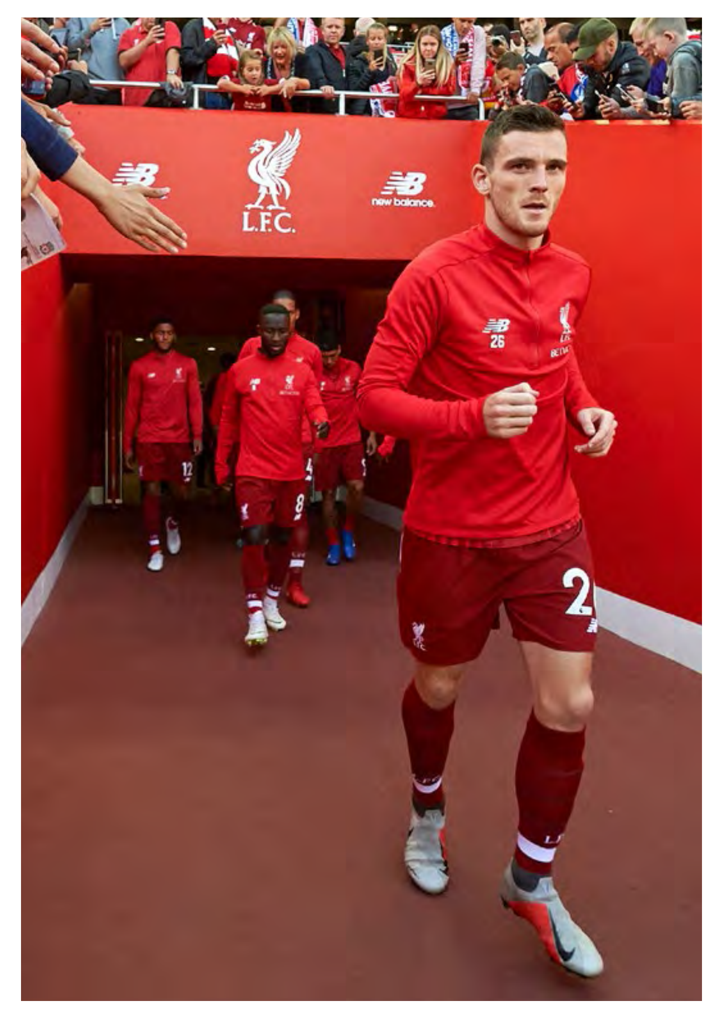

MATC
BETVICTOR
new balance
L.F.C.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Nick Taylor



HDAY

Full house, fine weather and the Reds on the way to another home victory, this time against Brighton – and our snapper is on hand to capture the ambience, action and Anfield experience



The players emerge from the tunnel for their pre-match warm-up routines



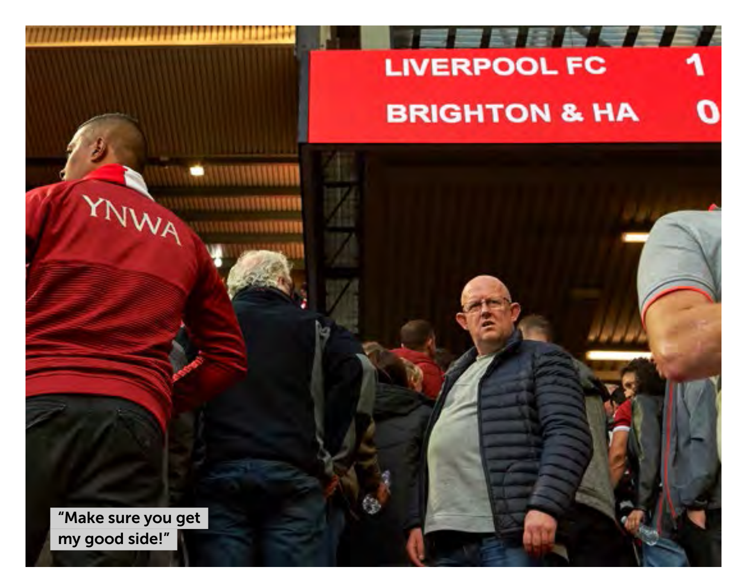


Adam Lallana high-fives the fans



Then out comes the team for the real thing

One word: glorious



"Make sure you get my good side!"



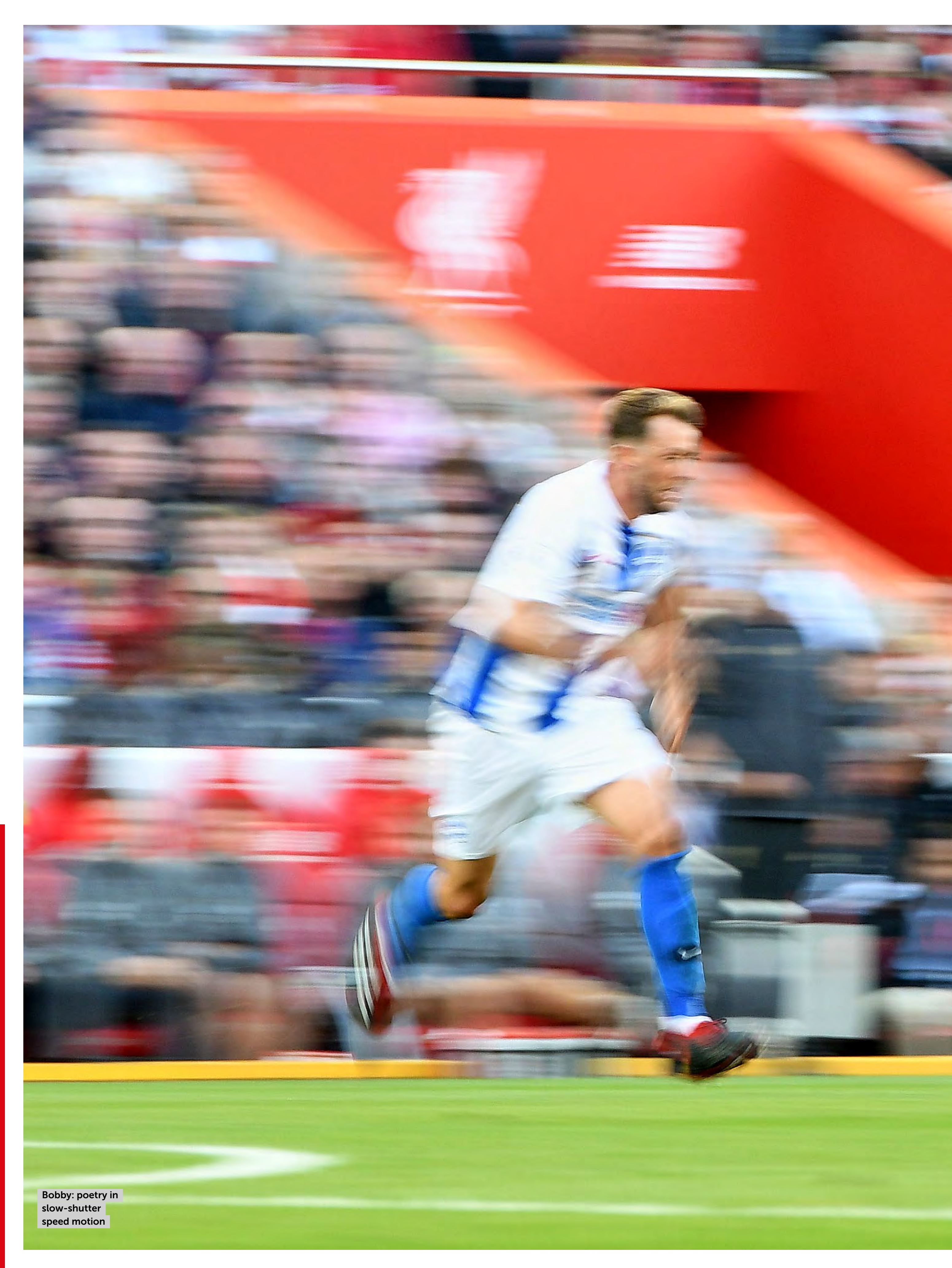
Getting the message at half-time







Get...
In...
THERE!!!



Bobby: poetry in slow-shutter speed motion



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Scotland's new skipper!







Mo swings in a Kop-end corner

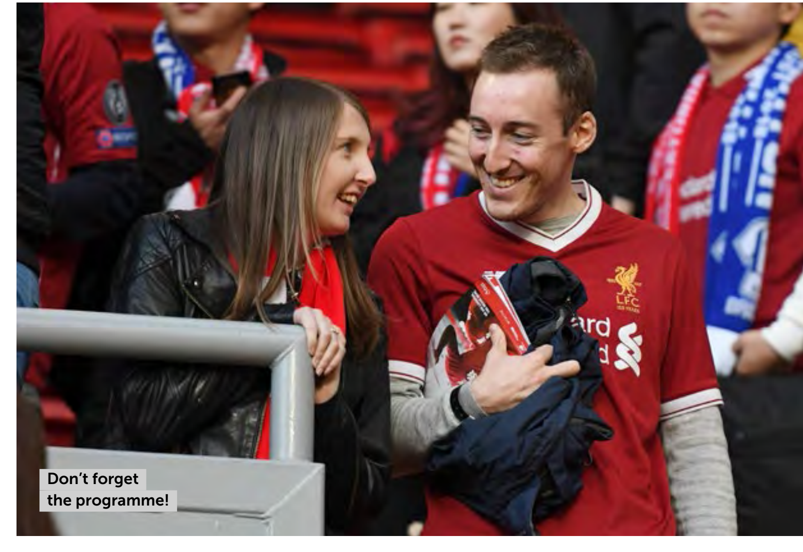
The boss rallies the troops, the Milner drives them on



Corner: piling on the pressure at the Kop end



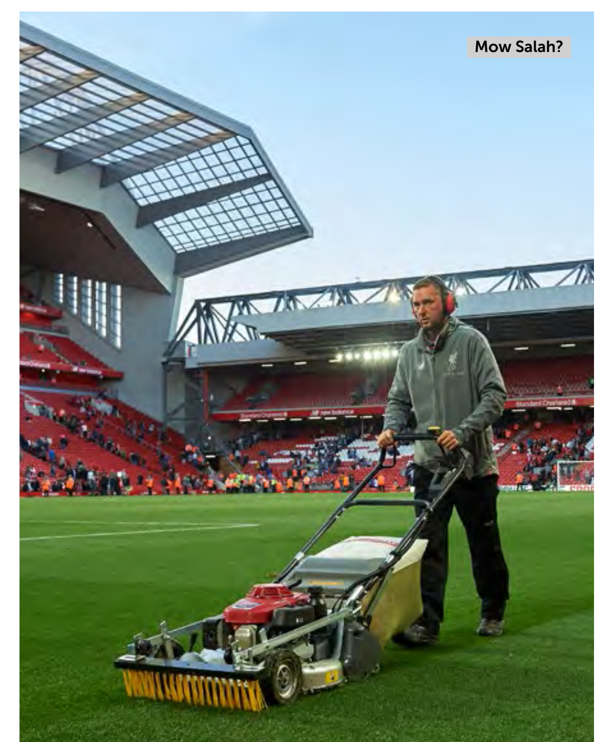
Altogether now



Don't forget the programme!



Time for one quick selfie



Mow Salah?

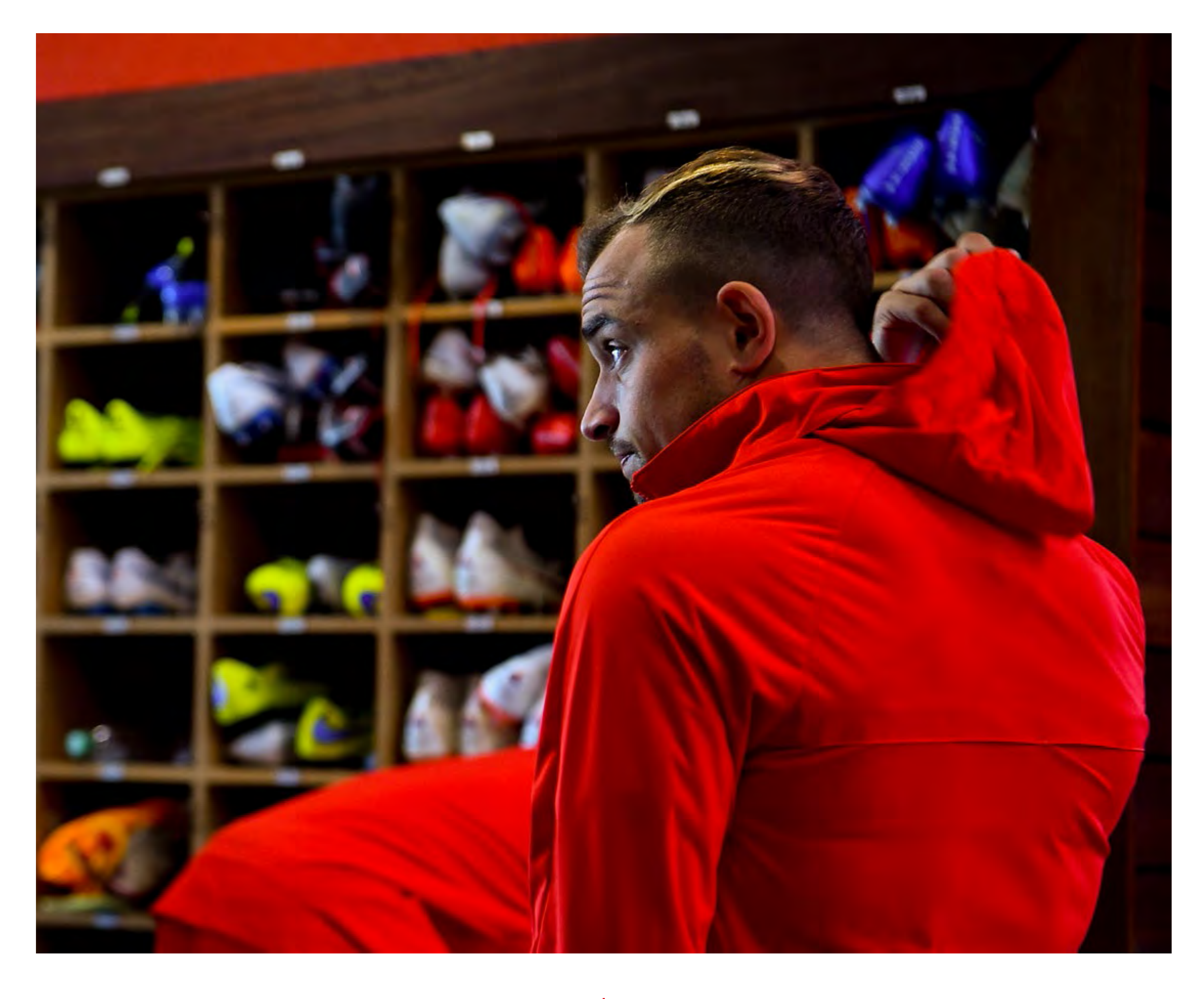


SAYS

Attacking ace Xherdan Shaqiri talks football. Simple as that

Interview: William Hughes


L.F.C.
BETVICTOR



ON LIVERPOOL FC

I think everybody wants to play in a big team and I have already played at big clubs such as Bayern Munich and Inter Milan. Of course, Stoke was a smaller team in that sense and it was a shame that the team went down last season, but I always gave my best there and people could see that with my performances in the Premier League over the past few years.

When I found out about Liverpool's interest I wanted to come here. I had other options as well but for me it was clear. I wanted to work with Jürgen and try to help this big club achieve something and be a part of the club's history.

ON BEING COMPETITIVE

The aim is for the club to win something – that has to be the goal of our team. We have to take every game and try to win it, then close out from your mind the last game you won and think: okay, we go forward now and look to the next game. It is like this that you win titles and I hope we are going to do that this year.

First of all, we want to try to play very good football. But we also know it is not always the case that good football wins, so we need to know how to win games – that's important – and to be competitive with other teams.

As a new player I want to show my football. Most of the players know me already from the Premier League and from Bayern and I have a good amount of experience. I won many titles with Bayern and I want to try to give this experience to this Liverpool team which is still young and try to help them to win something.

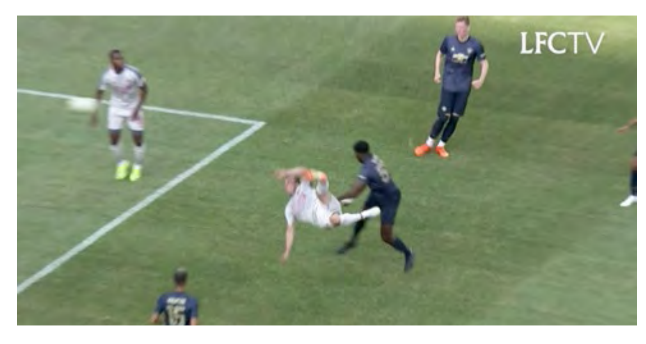
FIRST OF ALL WE WANT TO TRY TO PLAY VERY GOOD FOOTBALL. BUT WE ALSO KNOW IT IS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE THAT GOOD FOOTBALL WINS SO WE NEED TO KNOW HOW TO WIN GAMES



Frame by frame: that volley against Manchester United in Michigan







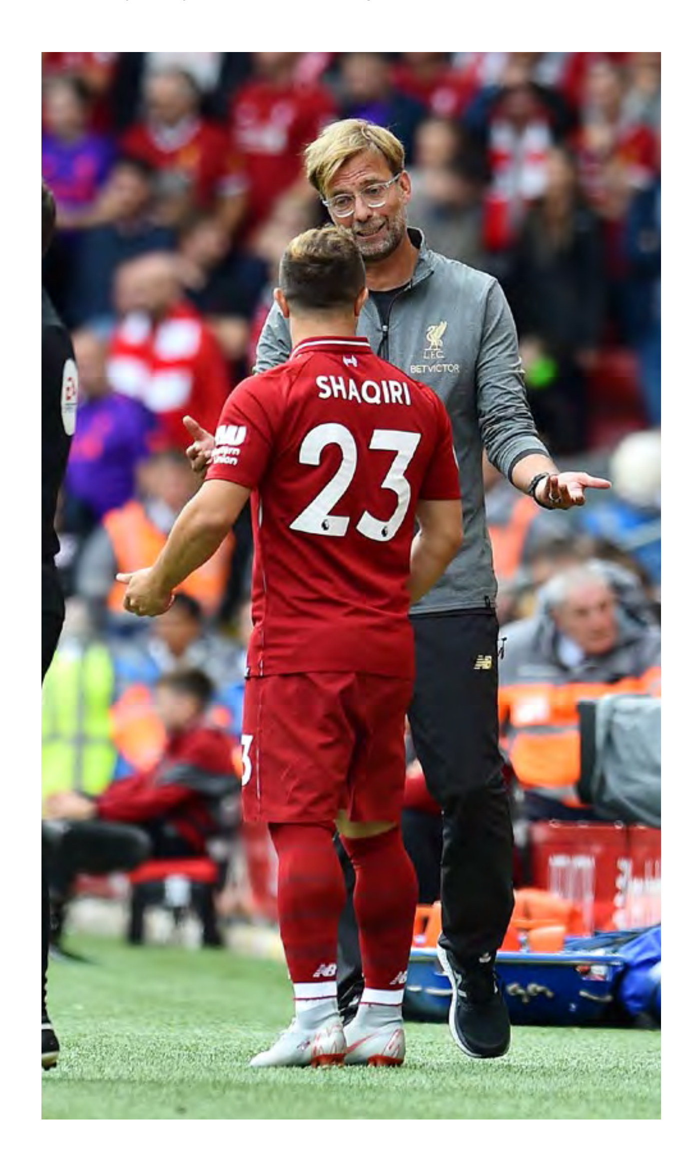




ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Playing against our big rivals Manchester United in Michigan was really a brilliant debut for me and the goal [the scissor-kick, left] is one that I'll never forget. In the end it was only a friendly game but when you play against Man United and you score like this, it is always beautiful and of course with almost 102,000 people there, it was a special day. I've played at the Nou Camp in Barcelona with Bayern Munich which is also a very big stadium but never in one that big, so it was really nice to score that kind of goal.

I still receive messages from fans about it and when they see me – they always speak about that goal!



ON JÜRGEN KLOPP

He's a very good coach, but for me the character he has is also important. He has a very nice character, you can joke with him, but of course you have to be focused on the pitch and give everything.

You can see the relationship he has with the players all the time, he's very friendly in speaking with them, and that was important for me in coming here and working with him. I knew him from Germany when I was at Bayern and he was manager of Dortmund.

He wanted me to come to Liverpool and I wanted to work with him so I am very happy to re-unite with him.

ON THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

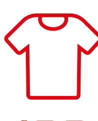
For me it was very important to play Champions League football again in the near future. I was only 22 when I last played in it. Of course I would like to try to win it again [Shaqiri was part of the Bayern squad that tasted success against Klopp's Dortmund in 2013]. That would be a great feeling.

I think in the end the issue behind why Liverpool didn't win the final last season was perhaps the strength-in-depth. We have brought some new players in, quality players who will add to the depth in the team. There is a lot of quality here now so I feel that throughout the whole season we can really go forward and try to win every game.

It was like this when we won trophies at Bayern. We had a lot of top players and it was maybe the best team that Bayern Munich ever had that season when we won everything. On the bench we had some very good players. In the final of the Champions League there were big players who were in the stand – they were not even on the bench – so we need to have that depth and also a strong team. I believe we have that now, so I am really looking forward to the season. It is going to be difficult, of course, but we have the quality to be really competitive.



SHAQ'S PREMIER STATS



128
Premier League games



19
Premier League goals



19
Premier League assists

Playing for Bayern versus AS Roma in the 2014/15 Champions League



International duty with Switzerland



ON THE ANFIELD EXPERIENCE

Coming on in the West Ham game was my first experience of playing for Liverpool at the stadium in a competitive game and it was a great feeling to be back there in the Premier League. There was an amazing atmosphere in the stadium, too, and to live that experience was incredible and a dream came true for me. Previously I'd only played in the Premier League at Anfield with Stoke and it was different to play here as the away team and always difficult. I'm really looking forward more to playing many more minutes in this amazing stadium.

ON SWITZERLAND

We have a good generation of our squad and we are trying to make good performances with the national team. In the last few years we have always qualified for the major tournaments and that suggests that we're a really good side at the moment and we can compete with the bigger teams.

So the progress is going very well with Switzerland and I am looking forward to the new UEFA Nations League that we start this month [September] but it is a tough group with the two teams we are up against Belgium and Iceland being very good sides. But let's see. We want to play against these nations rather than teams who may not be so competitive. It means that we can play for something and test ourselves, so I am really looking forward to those games.

ON THE NUMBER 23 SHIRT

I wanted this number at Liverpool. When I first came into the Switzerland squad in 2009/10, they gave me the no23 shirt and since then I have kept the number with the national team so for me it was important to have it here.

I saw Jamie Carragher say on social media that I would be doing well if I scored half as many goals as he did for Liverpool! But I know that big players and legends of the club like him have had this number so I'm really happy to have it too.



Champions League winner in 2013

SHAQ'S SILVERWARE



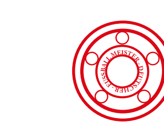
03

Swiss Super League titles with FC Basel



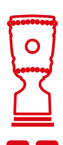
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Swiss Cups with FC Basel



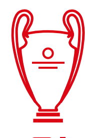
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German Bundesliga titles with Bayern Munich



02

German Cups with Bayern Munich



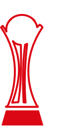
01

Champions League with Bayern Munich



01

UEFA Super Cup with Bayern Munich



01

FIFA Club World Cup with Bayern Munich



01

Swiss Golden Player award



01

Swiss Best Young Player award

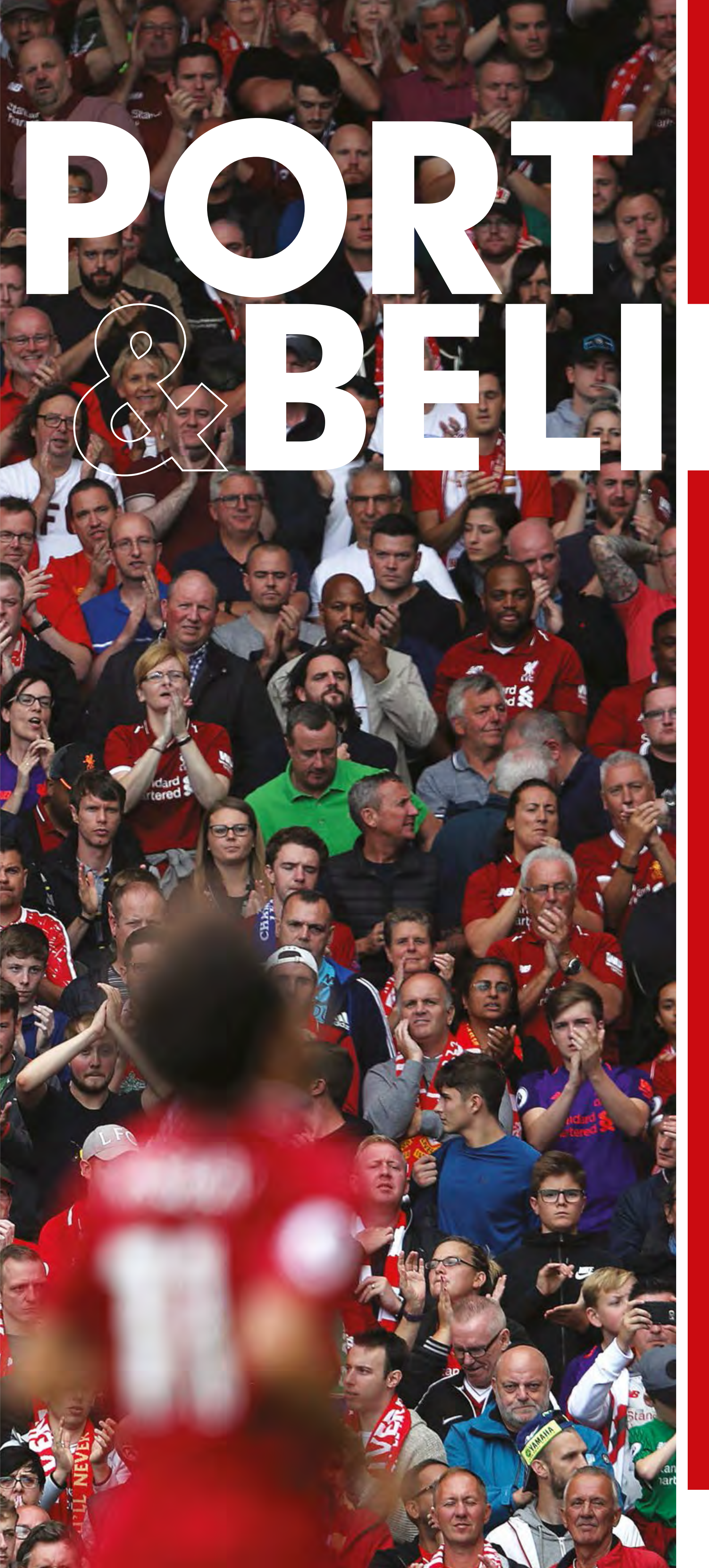


LIVERPOOL GIN

"Gini was brilliant in pre-season as the eight. He was good as the six, but brilliant as the eight. Gini is a good footballer. He can switch from one mindset to the other and that is pretty good for us." Jürgen Klopp talks up his versatile Dutch midfielder.



SUP



PORT & BELIEVE

That's what it says on one banner on the Kop, and it perfectly describes the relationship between fans, players, manager and club since that rather **BOSS** day in Kiev...

They want to sing, dance, have a good time and feel like they are part of something..."

With the help of Jamie Webster and the Liverpool-based BOSS Night project, that ethos was transported from Anfield to America during the summer when the Reds travelled to Charlotte, New Jersey and Michigan on their pre-season tour.

If the players were the headline act for most, as they faced Borussia Dortmund, Manchester City and Manchester United in the USA, the fan events arranged around the games were the diary priority for many.

"The match is only a small section of the day. Whether we get beat 2-0 or we win 3-0, we'll have a BOSS Night and the fans will be looking forward to it just as much," explained Liverpudlian musician Webster, who has built a dedicated following in the city during the past five years. His words, like his songs, rang true.

Saturday 26 May 2018: you had to be there

KIEV WAS A HUGE SUCCESS, PROBABLY MUCH BIGGER THAN ANYONE HAD ANTICIPATED, THERE WAS A REAL FEELGOOD FACTOR



From the EpiCentre in Charlotte to the Big Apple and the 107,000-capacity Big House in Michigan, supporters came in their hundreds to hear his tunes and those on the BOSS playlist – of "predominantly Liverpool-based bands" – overseen by Daniel Nicolson.

"It's very inclusive," said Nicolson. "We're at a stage now where whether you're from North Carolina or Asia or Australia, you can step into it as much as someone from Halewood, Bootle or Kirkby. We're all part of this one big gang – but the Scouse culture is front and centre."

The journey to this point began in 2007, when BOSS was launched as a magazine, a "platform for our culture" with music and football naturally at its heart. In recent years, however, the BOSS name has become instantly recognised for the post-match events held regularly at a warehouse at District in Liverpool's Baltic Triangle and attended by growing numbers estimated as 300 to 500 people.

Its rise in popularity has chimed with the Reds' resurgence on the pitch, with a new generation of fans experiencing the joy of a long run in European competition.

Moscow, Maribor, Seville, Porto, Manchester, Rome, Kiev. New places, new friends, new heroes and new songs.

Allez, Allez, Allez became the soundtrack, serving as the nucleus for a group of players and supporters in unison, driving Liverpool back to the biggest stage. And although Jürgen Klopp's team fell short against Real Madrid in the Champions League final in May, the scenes inside the fan event at Shevchenko Park during the hours before kick-off were unforgettable. Untarnished by the result, too.

"Kiev was a huge success, probably much bigger than anyone had anticipated and there was a real feel-good factor around what happened that day in Shevchenko Park," said Nicolson.

"After the dust settled, the conversation continued with the club about how we could do it again and what it would look like. The club has seen the success we've had and the culture that has come out of the BOSS Nights over the years and said: 'Let's pick that up and trust these lads'.

"It's never a case of being asked to compromise or do anything different – we've been given free reign."

And so it was that Nicolson and Webster were onboard the team flight to Charlotte, members of the travelling party for an eight-day stay in the States and a series of fan events – celebrations, really – at the locations visited by the club. Their objective was simple: to spread the Scouse culture.

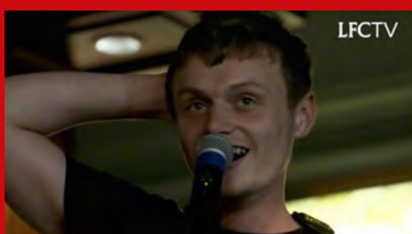
"We're just normal working lads," said Webster, an electrician, who was back to the 'day job' within 24 hours of returning home from the tour. "I'm just a Liverpool fan who has got a lot of passion for music and for Liverpool, as a city and as a club."

















ALLEZ ALLEZ...*AR-EH!* Scouse singer Jamie Webster was entertaining Reds fans in Michigan when who should join in but the boss himself!



American Reds in full voice

Nicolson added: "It's a cliche but Liverpool fans are different. Our support and our love for the club go beyond what happens on the pitch. It's around what happens on the terraces, it's what happens before and after a match. It's what happens in the city and our support and belief in our city and its culture. It's about the music.

"If fans around the world want to adopt any little bit of that and do it in their own environment then good on them."

Their source material is in Liverpool but their scale is global. Webster "didn't even have my own signature" before the trip but had plenty of opportunities to practise when local Reds supporters sought his autograph everywhere he went in America.

After the event in Kiev, a request landed in Nicolson's inbox from Bahrain: could he confirm the name of one of the songs he'd played in Shevchenko Park?

"For me, that's what it's all about. It's not about me, it's not about BOSS – it's about getting that culture out there.

"The whole package of being able to bring it to people is something very special. This is what we do and if you want to be a part of it, come and join us."

The Liverpool manager himself accepted that open invitation in Michigan. After the team's training session ahead of the International Champions Cup clash with United the following day, Klopp was alerted to an ongoing Supporters Club gathering inside the team hotel.

Webster was playing to a small crowd of fans when the gaffer gatecrashed the occasion. Once he had recovered from the surprise, the musician began strumming the chords of Allez, Allez, Allez and as the words kicked in, Klopp added his voice to the chorus.

"I tried to show my respect for the idea and all the things he has done since then. This song was a really big part of the final third of last season," the Reds boss later explained. It was a special moment and one that fulfilled their aforementioned objective.

"We're just trying to demonstrate the sort of passion we have in Liverpool and spread it," said the modest Webster before heading home.

Job done. BOSS.

• This article by Chris Shaw originally appeared on the club's official website.





THE COLOSSUS

Since Virgil van Dijk made his Liverpool Premier League debut the Reds have kept 11 clean-sheets in 20 games – the best record in the top-flight of English football. Call it a co-incidence, but you'd be wrong.



L.F.C.
BETVICTOR



Former goalie Chris Kirkland, LFC through and through, reveals why he's back to coach the keepers at Liverpool Women

Interview: William Hughes

Rejoining the club must have been a happy day for you?
Absolutely. I've always supported Liverpool. I used to travel up to Anfield with my dad from Hinckley on a bus when I was seven or eight years old. It was still standing on the Kop in those days so we used to stand and watch the games.

When I was starting my career at Coventry City, I said it at the time that Liverpool was the only team I'd have left for. I had a great time at Coventry, I was playing in the first-team and got on great with everyone, but once Liverpool made a bid for me it was always going to happen. Unfortunately my time here was hampered by injuries; whenever I got a good run going I'd get a serious injury.

These things happen but I'd do it all again just to play one game for the club. To be back here now is brilliant and I'm thankful to Neil Redfearn and Peter Moore for giving me the opportunity.

You finished playing at Bury in 2016 – had you been looking at moving into coaching?
It was something I'd been considering but at the time I needed to take a break from the game. It's been well-documented why and I needed the chance to spend some time with the family and get mentally right more than anything, because that's why I had to stop playing. Happily I'm in a great place now and looking forward to this challenge with Liverpool FC Women. I've waited for something like this. I've had quite a few offers with different things but I was always hoping something would come up with the club.

You were Britain's most expensive keeper when you joined the Reds in 2001, aged just 20. Alisson took over that mantle, albeit briefly, when he joined this summer...
I don't think that's going to be a problem for him at all. I saw him a few times during pre-season and now in the first few games and he just brings that calming presence, the same way as Virgil van Dijk did when he came in. Having two people like that now is a huge plus for the team.

Van Dijk's kept nine clean-sheets in 16 games since he's been here [pre-Brighton game] and I expect there to be a lot more clean-sheets now that Alisson's there too. He just looks the real deal. You don't get bought for a record fee if you're not a good goalkeeper, and the manager will know what a top keeper he has. I think we've seen in the first few games exactly what he's got to bring to the table. It's a great signing for the club.

There is no hiding place for goalkeepers and, of course, that comes with the territory. The difference between the top, top keepers and the others is that they make fewer mistakes. You are going to make mistakes – that happens to every keeper – but it's then about saving the next shot or making sure you do the next bit of work the right way. It's about limiting those mistakes at the top level.

You don't win anything without a good keeper and I think we've now got a top, top keeper which can hopefully push us on to winning silverware.

Have you spoken to John Achterberg since you took on the role as Liverpool FC Women goalkeeping coach?
I speak to John all the time and I see him at Anfield for the home games because I do a lot of work for LFCTV too. John invited me down for training at Melwood towards the end of August and I went down with my daughter Lucy who plays in goal for the club's girls' Under-12s. John's been brilliant with me and said: 'Anything you need, just give me a shout'. That's the type of bloke he is. It's great to have his support and be able to bounce ideas off him.

Have you brought various things from previous goalkeeping coaches you've played under?
To an extent but it's not about me. I've said to our keepers, Anke Preuss and Fran Kitching, that it's about them and what they need. I've told them: 'You tell me what you want and I'll try and put a session on for that'. It's about the keepers and what makes them tick because they're the ones who have to play at the weekend, so they've got to make sure they're fully-prepared. They do their training during the week and I'm here to try to help them.



I'D HAD A FEW OFFERS WITH OTHER THINGS BUT I WAS ALWAYS HOPING SOMETHING WOULD COME UP WITH THIS CLUB


BETVICTOR



Anke made a particularly impressive competitive debut against Manchester United last month...
She's done really well so far. From the first training session I could tell that she's top-drawer – just the way she moves and conducts herself. She's got great hands and she wants to learn. She's probably the fittest keeper I've ever worked with, too. She did all the running in pre-season and was beating the other girls on the pitch which they weren't too happy about!

I've always said that the fitter you can be as a goalkeeper, the better you will be in goal. Throughout my career I prided myself on being as fit as I could be and I'm trying to instil that into the girls now. I did all the running with the outfield players at my various clubs and it does you no harm whatsoever.

We've also got Fran Kitching who came in from Sheffield United and she's going to be a fantastic signing. I must admit I hadn't seen much of Fran before the gaffer [Neil Redfearn] said to me: 'Listen, I want to bring her in'. I trust the gaffer's opinion 100 per cent and our technical manager Zoe Johnson, who was manager at Sheffield last season, vouched for her as well. After the first couple of sessions I could see exactly why they wanted to bring her to the club because she's got a lot of ability.

Anke and Fran have got to push each other for the jersey and I'll be making sure that they do that. They know they've got to work hard with me and they've done that, and they've been a pleasure to work with because they want to listen, learn and improve.

I'VE SAID TO OUR KEEPERS THAT IT'S ABOUT THEM AND WHAT THEY NEED – I'M HERE TO TRY AND HELP THEM

How much does analysis play a part in the work you do?
Quite a lot. We're really luck to have two brilliant guys with us in Jordan Whelan, our analyst, and Alan Jordan, who looks after the strength and conditioning. They go into such detail with everything you can do to give the players an edge on game-day.

Al does a lot of great work with the girls with warm-ups and strengthening in the gym and then afterwards with making sure they have enough protein and monitoring what they drink. Jordan provides us with all the footage we need too. It's edited so, for instance, we can see Anke's clips of every time she touches the ball in the 90 minutes, so we can see just what she does. It's a brilliant resource to have.

The day after the United game, Anke texted me saying she wasn't too happy with some of the stuff she did which I thought was

extremely harsh because she played very well, but it shows you how hard she wants to work to improve and get better.
The game has moved on so much but you've got to adapt. When I started playing there was no core-strength and stability-work or any monitoring of nutrition. We're lucky as we've got two lads who are well onboard with everything like that.

You mention that your daughter Lucy plays for the Under-12s; she must have been delighted to see you back at the club...
She was. It's great but I leave her to it, I don't want to get too involved – she's enjoying it as herself. If she asks me for advice then that's not a problem at all and we will go out in the garden or down to the park. But I don't want to take it too seriously as she's only eleven and kids are meant to enjoy it at that age and not think too much about what's going on. As long as she enjoys it, I'm more than happy.

She was delighted when she heard I'd come back to the club. She comes with me to all the games as she is a big Liverpool fan. She asks me questions every day about what we've done in training, what the keepers did and what they ate and all that sort of stuff.

Over the past 12 months we've seen a number of well-known figures from the men's game get involved in women's football such as yourself, Neil Redfearn and Phil Neville....
I hope that's encouraging for the growth of the women's game in this country. I ran my own girls' under-10s team because my daughter plays and that made me even more keen on the game. I think everyone's seen over the last two years just how big the game's going now for the women.

How much bigger it will go, I'm not too sure. I think it's up there now but it's up to us to keep trying to grow it. The more people involved, both men and women who have had good professional careers and want to do well for the game, then fantastic.



Chris puts Anke through her paces in training



MEET THE GIRLS IN GOAL

Anke Preuss
Anke was born in Ratingen, Germany, on 22 September 1992. She's a former German youth international who won the UEFA Women's Champions League during her time at FFC Frankfurt, from whom she joined Sunderland Ladies in 2017. The vastly-experienced shot-stopper has also played for Verona and Hoffenheim.



Fran Kitching
Fran's originally from Rotherham, born on 17 February 1998. Signed in August 2018 after a brief spell at Sheffield United, she was formerly at Chelsea and spent part of last season on loan at Watford, producing a fine display in an FA Cup tie against the Reds at the County FA headquarters in Walton.



PRIZE FIGHTER

Opinion is divided over Neil Ruddock's spell at LFC in the 1990s, but it's fair to say the centre-half packed a punch for the Reds, not least when his thumping late header made it 3-3 against Manchester United at Anfield in January 1994.

FRIDAY


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new balance

NIGHT LIVE



Liverpool U23s' first home game of the season – under the lights at Anfield – didn't quite bring a result the performance deserved but may prove to be an invaluable experience for Neil Critchley's young Reds

After an opening-day stalemate at Brighton, Liverpool's Under-23 side, skippered by Corey Whelan (now on loan at Crewe Alexandra), had the incentive of playing in front of the Kop at Anfield to get their season up and running. They were clearly keen to show the several thousand-strong crowd what they were all about, flying out of the traps. Their high-tempo, high-pressing game, in the image of Jürgen Klopp's first-team style, had a Tottenham side, insistent on playing out from the back, continually in trouble – deep trouble – as early as the second minute.











A deliberate handball on the goal-line meant the visitors would play almost the entirety of the evening with ten men, an advantage the Reds could not turn into three points despite their dominance and the chances created. Adam Lewis – otherwise enterprising in his attacking left-back role – struck that spot-kick over the bar. Undeterred, the U23s continued to probe and press, pass and move and took the lead through man-of-the-match Bobby Adekanye. Composure getting the better of him with a couple of early opportunities, his trickery and near-post finish put the Reds in front on 13mins. It would be a menacing display from the winger unlucky not to add to his tally.

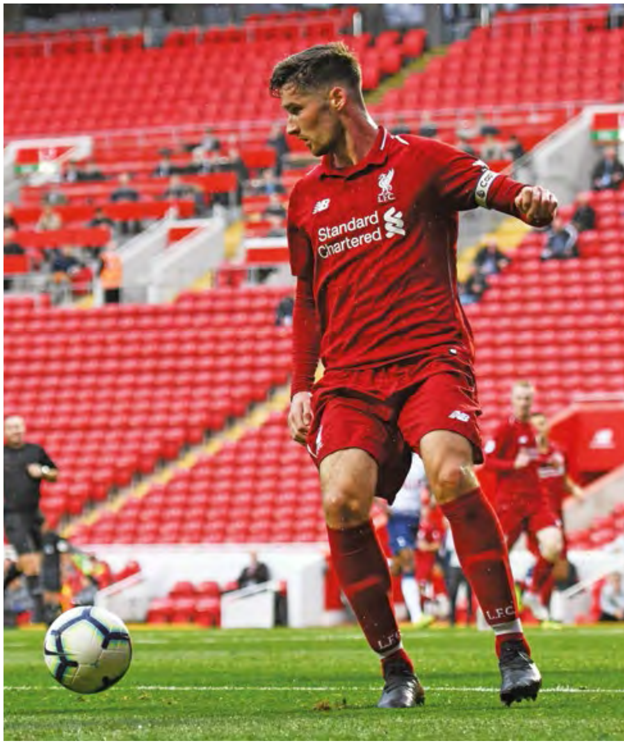












Spurs' leveller midway through the first-half in a rare counter didn't knock Liverpool off their game. But 1-1 was how the score stayed, largely down to some last-ditch defending in a frantic finale at the Kop-end with the youthful crowd on school holidays doing their best to help the ball over the line. A performance, though, of many positives for Neil Critchley to build upon, the mature display reflecting the confidence garnered by Nat Phillips and Curtis Jones' first-team duties, on an evening where his side embraced the venue and hopefully gave themselves much more to look forward to. Look out for future Academy matches at Anfield this season – and remember Official Members and season-ticket holders get in for free!





BREAD AND BUTTER

This frayed but fabulous photograph from around May 1923 shows the Liverpool team huddled around skipper Donald Mackinlay and the League Championship trophy, won for the second successive season and the fourth time in the club's history.

Getting to Anfield

Public transport: the quick and convenient way to the match

Get the bus

On matchday the 917 express bus runs direct from Liverpool city centre to Anfield every 10 minutes. There is a discounted ticket price of £4, with fans receiving a discount on soft drinks at LFC kiosks within the stadium on presentation of their return-ticket.

The Soccerbus will be operating three hours prior to kick-off and up to 90 minutes after the final whistle. A new family ticket (two adults + two children) is available for £7 and a group ticket (four adults) for £10. Soccerbus tickets can now be bought at any rail station by asking for a 'plus Anfield/Goodison' ticket.

Other bus services include the 26 and 27 from LiverpoolONE station and 17 from Queen Square. The 68/168, which operates between Bootle and Aigburth, and the 14 and 19 (from Queen Square) stop a short walk from the ground.

The 501 football service operates direct to Lime Street from Walton Lane for up to two hours after the final whistle. Adult £2, children £1.

The 502 also runs two journeys from LFC Anfield after each home game to Lime Street.



Trains and automobiles

Lime Street is two miles from Anfield and taxi fares usually cost £7-9, or buses go from nearby Queen Square. Merseyrail runs from town to Sandhills station from where matchday passengers can use the Soccerbus.

Back of the cab

Taxi pick-up points are available outside of the stadium and on major routes. Taxi One operates a taxi-bus service from St Johns Lane, Liverpool city centre, direct to Anfield. A frequent service operates from three hours prior to kick off. Taxi One return-service operates from the corner of Anfield Road/Sleepers Hill opposite the Isla Gladstone conservatory back to the city-centre.

On your bike!

The free LFC Cycle Hub will be located on Anfield Road for the 2018/19 season, allowing fans who cycle to the game to park their bikes safely and securely with an attendant.

Walk on

Walking routes are signposted from Lime Street, Sandhills and Kirkdale stations to assist fans who travel to the game using local rail services.

Get there early!

Avoid the crowds and get to Anfield early to enjoy the Fan Zones, located in Paisley Square and Anfield Road and open four hours before kick-off – ideal for meeting before the game to soak up the atmosphere.

For more advice please visit www.liverpoolfc.com/gettingtoanfield

ANFIELD MATCHDAY TRANSPORT PLAN 2018/19 SEASON



~~TEEN TRAINING~~
TRAIN LIKE YOUR HEROES



Official Membership

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This is learning to play 'The Liverpool Way' at Melwood.

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- Train like your heroes with the help of LFC coaches
- Receive an exclusive LFC gift bag to make your day truly unforgettable

For your chance to enter visit **liverpoolfc.com/members**
Or join now at **liverpoolfc.com/membership**

WE ARE LIVERPOOL. THIS MEANS MORE.

Playing their part in Anfield



Past and present Liverpool stars support Red Neighbours projects in local community

Liverpool FC continues to back Fans Supporting Foodbanks this season, with collections on Premier League matchdays on Anfield Road and inside the LFC Anfield Superstore, and just recently Adam Lallana joined the Red Neighbours team to donate much-needed items to the North Liverpool Foodbank.

Midfielder Adam took a tour around the facility and chatted to volunteers. He said: "It's extremely saddening to realise that foodbanks are part of everyday life for many local people but also very humbling to see the massive contribution made by fans. They have already helped thousands of local people and this season we can help thousands more."

Victoria Ponsby-Martin, North Liverpool Foodbank coordinator, added "We are extremely grateful for the support we get from Red Neighbours, not to mention the generous Liverpool FC fans. Donations from Fans Supporting Foodbanks makes up over 20 per cent of our annual donations so we are extremely reliant on them."

Meanwhile goalscoring legend Robbie Fowler met local families at an Anfield breakfast club organised by Red Neighbours. Over 60 residents from the L4, L5 and L6 areas, many visiting Anfield for the first time, were served a warm healthy breakfast followed by a morning of singing and dancing and a tour of the stadium.

"I'm a born-and-bred Liverpool lad and the people here have always been so good to me," said Robbie, "so it's great to come along to things like this and spend time with the local community.

"We are lucky enough to travel the world with LFC and meet so many fans, but it's so important to give something back to those at home as well."

Food poverty and education is one of four main areas of focus for Red Neighbours, which works with local residents, community groups and schools in the Anfield area. The others are: creating memorable experiences for young people; support for the elderly community; and encouraging a physically-active community.

Soccer in the dock

"A-L-B...E-R-T...Albert Dock is the one for me!"
How a city landmark filled in for a special football pitch

The Royal Albert Dock, one of the jewels in the city of Liverpool's crown, has seen plenty of unusual events over the years, but football on a floating pitch must surely have been a first just recently.

It was all part of a festival of free sport provided by LFC Foundation and Everton in the Community. The 12-day 'Football on the Dock' event also featured drop-in sessions for Premier League Girls Football and Respect For All (for children with complex and additional needs) along with a Premier League Kicks tournament.

Foundation project-lead Katie Ellis said: "The activities organised by our qualified coaches were open inclusive to all abilities, and we saw plenty of new faces turning up to take part – it's been a brilliant summer at the Dock!"

All part of LFC Foundation's passion for the community, delivering programmes and partnerships to create life-changing opportunities for children and young people.











WHAT'S IN



STORE

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MENS NAVY COLOUR BLOCK POLO
(A11522) £25

LADIES RED DIAMANTE CREST TEE
(A11530) £20

LADIES GREY MARL FOREVER MAKING HISTORY TEE
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LADIES BLACK MARL ZIP THRU
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What's On

SEPT/OCT

LONDON CALLING

Two trips to the capital and Chelsea twice, home and away, in the space of a few days. That's what September holds in store, along with mouthwatering Champions League football, for Liverpool.

It starts with a Wembley date against Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday 15 September. The Reds had been scheduled to become the first opposing team to visit the new Tottenham Stadium, but with the North London club's move delayed due to essential safety testing the fixture will take place at the national stadium.

Liverpool will be hoping for a far better outcome than last October's visit when Spurs ran out 4-1 winners. Kick-off is 12.30pm and it's live on Sky Sports.

Three days later comes a first Champions League group game of 2018/19, as Liverpool play host to Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday 18th, followed by a Premier League home game against Southampton on Saturday 22nd with a 3pm kick-off thrown in for good measure!

Then it's time for Carabao Cup third-round action as the Reds host Maurizio Sarri's Chelsea on Wednesday 26th. It's the sixth time the clubs have met in the competition. Liverpool won second and third-round ties at Anfield in August 1977 and November 2000 respectively.

Then came a 3-2 defeat in the final of February 2005, at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium. The Reds lost a fifth-round tie at Stamford Bridge in December 2007 then won at the same stage and venue four years later.

Most recently came a two-legged semi-final in January 2015 which finished 2-1 to Chelsea on aggregate. Regardless, the Reds will be hoping that, come late February, they will have lifted the League Cup trophy for a record ninth time in the tournament's various guises down the years.

September ends with a second trip to London for the 'return' match against Chelsea, this time back in the Premier League, on Saturday 29 September and live on BT Sport with a 5.30pm kick-off.

Eight days later, on Sunday 6 October, there's another humdinger: Liverpool v Manchester City, kick-off 4.30pm. Hold on tight...

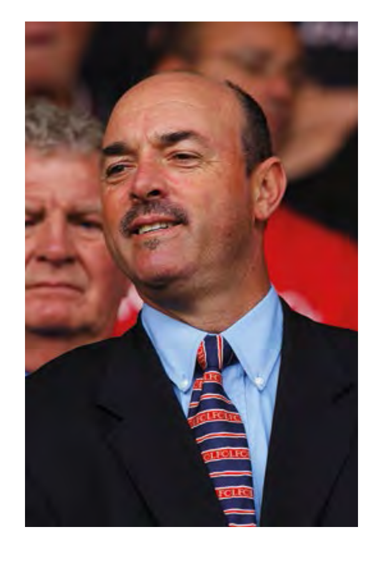


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ENERGY DRINK
SUGAR FREE
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ENERGY DRINK
GREEN APPLE
BRING IT ON!

SEPT/OCT

What's On

CLEM AND BRUCIE NIGHT





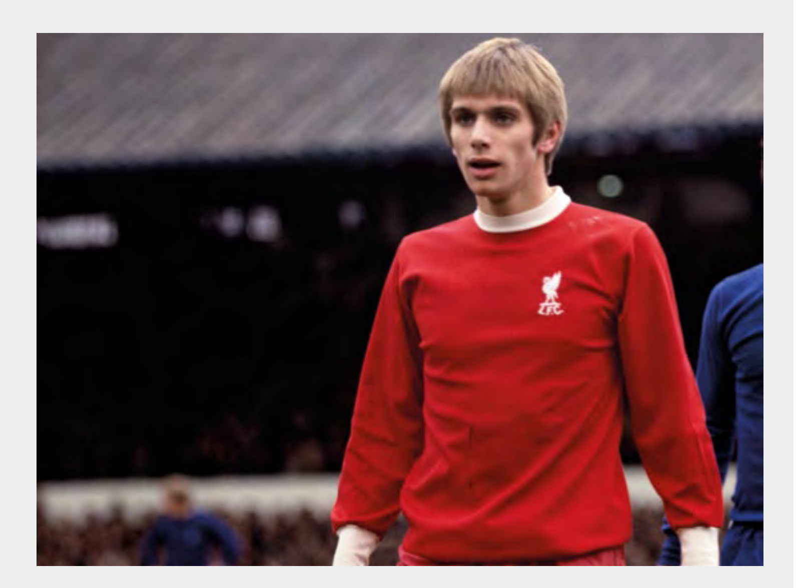
Off the field the month of September brings an opportunity for fans to see two of Liverpool Football Club's goalkeeping greats in conversation at Anfield on Thursday 20th.

Ray Clemence and Bruce Grobbelaar are both in the club's top ten appearance-makers with more than 1,300 outings between them. Clem was here from 1967 to 1981, during which time he missed just six league games and helped the club to a host of trophies. Between 1981 and 1994 Brucie won six top-flight titles, one European Cup, three FA Cups and three League Cups too.

Tickets for the event, which includes a drinks reception and three-course meal, plus the chance to win signed LFC memorabilia, can be purchased at liverpoolfc.com/events.

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

29 years ago since the mighty Reds beat Crystal Palace 9-0 on 12 September 1989.
37 years since Ian Rush scored his first-ever goal for Liverpool on 30 September 1981.
40 years since that famous 7-0 victory over Tottenham at Anfield on 2 September 1978.
44 years since the club's record victory: 11-0 versus Stromsgodset on 17 September 1974.
54 years since the Reds beat KR Rejkyavik in their first Euro tie at Anfield on 14 September 1964.



50 years since Alun Evans made a scoring debut for Liverpool FC on 21 September 1968...

Eighteen-year-old striker Alun's move to Liverpool caused quite a stir at the time with the Reds making the Wolves teenager British football's first six-figure footballer.

Manager Bill Shankly was unabashed at spending such a high figure on a young player. Although Evans had only played 20 top-flight games at the time, the ebullient Scot said: "If Wolves had asked £200,000, I would have been prepared to pay it."

Evans was a fortnight short of his 19th birthday when he made his debut against Leicester City at Anfield but if nerves were jangling, they didn't show. Shanks watched his team score four goals in the first 12 minutes with Evans smashing the third past Foxes keeper Peter Shilton.

Leicester got their revenge that season, 1968/69, by knocking Liverpool out of the FA Cup in a fifth-round replay. In the league the Reds finished as runners-up to Leeds United.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Markus Babbel
46 on 8 September

David Thompson
41 on 12 September

Dominic Solanke
21 on 14 September

Karlheinz Riedle
53 on 16 September

John Aldridge
60 on 18 September

Kevin Lewis
78 on 19 September

Harry Kewell
40 on 22 September



Anke Preuss
26 on 22 September

John Arne Riise
38 on 24 September

Ronnie Whelan
57 on 25 September





ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS



AT ANFIELD

Friday 7th December
Saturday 8th December
Friday 14th December
Saturday 15th December
Thursday 20th December



It's time to get the party started.

The Ultimate Christmas Ball at Anfield is the perfect setting for your Christmas Celebrations, hosted within the Main Stand, the stunning lounges will be transformed into a festive spectacular. And with our fantastic package from just £65pp including food, entertainment and drinks, our all-inclusive party night really is the ideal venue choice.

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"Great night enjoyed by all of our staff, will be booking for 2018."
Frank Rogers Ltd

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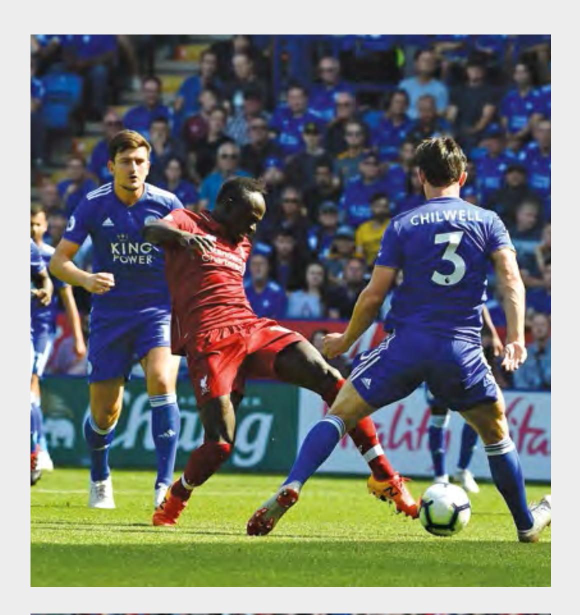
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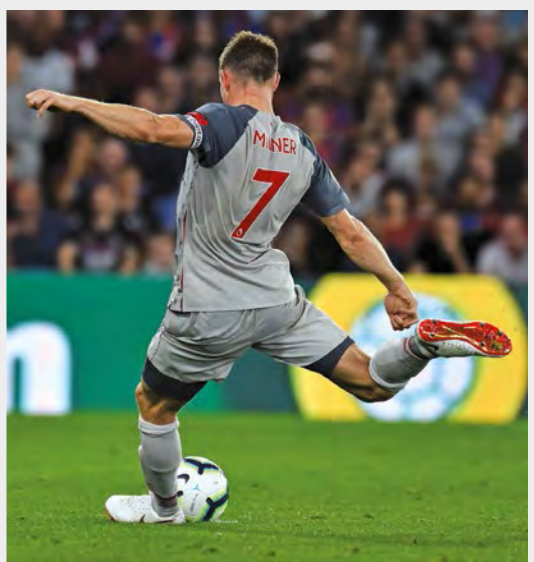
WE ARE LIVERPOOL.
THIS MEANS MORE.



AUGUST		SCORE/KO	TV	SCORERS
12	**West Ham United (H)**	**4-0**	**sky**	**Mane 2, Salah, Sturridge**
20	Crystal Palace (A)	2-0	sky	Milner (pen), Mane
25	**Brighton and Hove Albion (H)**	**1-0**	**BT**	**Salah**
SEPTEMBER				
1	Leicester City (A)	2-1	sky	Mane, Firmino
15	Tottenham Hotspur (A)	12.30pm	sky	
18	**Paris St-Germain (UCL, H)**	**8pm**	**BT**	
22	**Southampton (H)**	**3pm**		
26	**Chelsea (CC3, H)**	**8pm**	**sky**	
29	Chelsea (A)	5.30pm	BT	
OCTOBER				
3	Napoli (UCL, A)	8pm	BT	
6	**Manchester City (H)**	**4.30pm**	**sky**	
20	Huddersfield Town (A)	5.30pm	BT	
24	**Red Star Belgrade (UCL, H)**	**8pm**	**BT**	
27	**Cardiff City (H)**	**3pm**		
30/31	Carabao Cup 4			
NOVEMBER				
3	Arsenal (A)	5.30pm	BT	
6	Red Star Belgrade (UCL, A)	5.55pm	BT	
11	**Fulham (H)**	**12pm**	**BT**	
24	Watford (A)	3pm		
28	Paris St-Germain (UCL, A)	8pm	BT	
DECEMBER				
1	**Everton (H)**	**3pm**		
4	Burnley (A)	7.45pm		
8	Bournemouth (A)	3pm		
11	**Napoli (UCL, H)**	**8pm**	**BT**	
15	**Manchester United (H)**	**3pm**		
18/19	Carabao Cup 5			
22	Wolverhampton Wanderers (A)	3pm		
26	**Newcastle United (H)**	**3pm**		
29	**Arsenal (H)**	**3pm**		
JANUARY				
1	Manchester City (A)	3pm		
5	FA Cup 3			
8/9	Carabao Cup s-f 1			
12	Brighton and Hove Albion (A)	3pm		
19	**Crystal Palace (H)**	**3pm**		
22/23	Carabao Cup s-f 2			
26	FA Cup 4			
30	**Leicester City (H)**	**8pm**		
FEBRUARY				
2	West Ham United (A)	3pm		
9	**Bournemouth (H)**	**3pm**		
12/13	UCL Round of 16 1			
16	FA Cup 5			
19/20	UCL Round of 16 1			
23	Manchester United (A)	3pm		
24	Carabao Cup final			
27	**Watford (H)**	**8pm**		
MARCH				
2	Everton (A)	3pm		
5/6	UCL Round of 16 2			
9	**Burnley (H)**	**3pm**		
12/13	UCL Round of 16 2			
16	Fulham (A)/FA Cup 6			
30	**Tottenham Hotspur (H)**	**3pm**		
APRIL				
6	Southampton (A)/FA Cup s-f	3pm		
9/10	UCL q-f 1			
13	**Chelsea (H)**	**3pm**		
16/17	UCL q-f 2			
20	Cardiff City (A)	3pm		
27	**Huddersfield Town (H)**	**3pm**		
30/1	UCL s-f 1			
MAY				
4	Newcastle United (A)	3pm		
7/8	UCL s-f 2			
12	**Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)**	**3pm**		
18	FA Cup final			
JUNE				
1	UCL final			









NEIL MELLOR

All goalies make mistakes but Alisson has already shown his commanding presence

Goalkeeper is a position Liverpool have needed to strengthen for a few years so when Alisson was signed from Roma there was a lot of hope that he could potentially be the final piece of the jigsaw – a player who could propel the club to win a first Premier League title.

He's made a good start to his Liverpool career, but we went into the September international break on the back of his first mistake which led to Leicester scoring in our 2-1 win at the King Power Stadium. That creates some uncertainty. Was it a one-off? Will he learn from that error or could there be more mistakes along the way?

Aside from that, Alisson's goalkeeping has looked assured. He's dealt well with every kind of shot and cross he's faced and all he needs to get up-to-speed with is realising that, in the Premier League, strikers will always put a goalkeeper under pressure so you've got to be careful when taking an extra touch.

That said, he clearly has the confidence to play the ball with his feet and looks like he has the mentality to not let that setback get into his mind and affect him. Every goalkeeper makes mistakes, but it is the mentally-strong ones that become the best because they keep doing what they do well and put avoidable errors behind them.

At Liverpool's Academy, under Steve Heighway we were always told that goalkeepers and defenders are risk-free players. It was a simple message that was part of our upbringing in the Liverpool Way. The game has changed – goalkeepers need to be better with their feet and defenders are asked to play out from the back more – and it is something that football's English audience are having to adapt to. Alisson fits into the category of a modern-day goalkeeper.

The biggest thing I want to see a goalkeeper do is be commanding and dominate his penalty-area. Alisson does that and, along with Virgil van Dijk, he has added presence at the back.

He's brought an air of dominance to the Liverpool penalty-area at a time when other teams maybe saw it as a weakness and has also been helped by having a settled back-four of van Dijk, Joe Gomez, Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold in front of him.

Gomez and van Dijk are a new central-defensive partnership that have performed well together and both full-backs have been outstanding. But the job James Milner does, for example, of filling in for Robertson so he has the licence to go forward shouldn't be underestimated.



I also believe that a good goalkeeper can win you a lot of points during a season, not just through his saves but also by spreading confidence through the team. If you are solid defensively you've always got a chance of winning games, especially when you've got Mo Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino upfront, and the goalkeeper is a big part of that.

Alisson has made important saves in three close games already this season. He made a save from Luka Milivojevic's free-kick at Crystal Palace look comfortable – most goalkeepers would have struggled to get across but his footwork was outstanding.

Then he made a big save late on from Brighton's Pascal Gross to prevent two points being dropped and made another important save from Leicester's Demarai Gray in the first half when Liverpool were leading 1-0 and conceding a goal could have completely changed the momentum of the game.

It's only four games in, but Alisson is already making big saves and we know – especially with the run of fixtures coming up – that he will be called upon a lot throughout the season.

Hopefully he can be the difference because, although it is only September, a schedule that sees the Reds play PSG and Napoli in the Champions League plus visits to Spurs and Chelsea in the Premier League ahead of an October Anfield showdown with Manchester City could make this a defining month in Liverpool's season.

We know Liverpool can beat any team, but can they do it consistently? We'll find over the next four weeks and also get a better idea of just how big a difference Alisson can make.

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